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# THE FAIRVIEW IDEA

HERBERT QUICK

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# THE FAIRVIEW IDEA

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*A Story of the New Rural Life*

*By*

HERBERT QUICK

*Author of*
ON BOARD THE GOOD SHIP EARTH
THE BROWN MOUSE. ETC.

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# Restoring Our Rural Morale

In the month of August, 1914, war became the chief occupation of the whole world. No one can even conjecture as to the length of the time which must elapse before average humanity will be able to see world affairs in the pure white light of peace. Things which preceded the World War will be reconsidered in the dull baleful glow which preceded the explosion; and all matters following its conclusion will be looked at in the light of its immeasurable effects. In this book all consideration of the war is purposely excluded; for it relates to the inner life of the rural community which must go on wholesomely forever if our nation is to be equal to the responsibilities of either peace or war. And yet the Great War changed radically our manner of looking at agricultural problems.

After we engaged in the conflict we suddenly became more concerned about farms and farming, if not better informed or more intelligent. Prior to that time the farm was regarded by most Americans as a place to leave for the town; by a few of us as a thing to which it would be a fine thing to return after living the real life of the city; by millions as an institution to which they were condemned by some mysterious Court of Last Resort for a life of more or less solitary confinement at hard labor; and by almost all of us as a great underlying, all-supporting Foundation of Na-

tional Life, which had always existed, would always exist, and to which very little attention need be paid. Food, shelter and clothing for all of us and for much of the rest of the world had always come from the American farm as the rain falls from heaven, by the natural process of nature, descending upon the just and the unjust alike. Always looking carefully after her purse, the nation has neglected her scrip; and expected to be fed as casually as does the Colombian peasant who pulls from the nearest plantain tree the bread of each meal. The contrast between America and China was, and fortunately still is, best illustrated by the fact that while the average conversation of the American is, or at least used to be, about almost everything else, five-sixths of the talk of the average poor Chinese relates to the subject of food.

Then we engaged in war. Not in an ordinary war; but the bitterest crisis which has occurred in the world's history. One has often wondered at the thoughts which must have passed through the minds of a philosophical Roman when there broke on the frontiers of his Empire those waves of conquest and carnage, which, set in motion by obscure convulsions in the remote and unknown regions of Asia, hurled people against people, set in motion innumerable strange and ferocious hosts, crushed peaceful populations, obliterated cities, and propelled against the defenders of Greece, Rome and Byzantium one wave of war after another, until at last the old civilizations fell whelmed

in the rising, leveling, degrading onrush of barbarism. But we have seen a stranger and more horrible thing. We have seen the storm gather within our sight. We have seen our own civilization turn and rend herself. Not in some remote, unmapped region did this tempest arise, but in the very center of the life we know; and when it came, it assailed the world in guises more terrible than that which it assumed under Genseric, Attila, Alaric, or Genghiz Khan.

War came as of old; but war made more horrible through the plans and specifications of science.

Pestilence came as of old; but pestilence held back by sanitation until it had eaten away the last bulwarks against it.

Famine came as of old, but famine tabulated, blueprinted, regulated, assigned, and codified in statutes of vitamines and calories.

Famine came, not alone to the regions overrun by the warring hosts, but to almost all the world. Only some of those regions which lie outside the drainage-basins of railway and steamship escaped the suck of the famished nations for food.

This is the ultimate wonder of the war. If Marcus Aurelius, who wrote his Meditations amid the tumults of camps of Roman legionaries on the Danube or the Euphrates, speculated and wondered at the causes which unsheathed against Rome the swords of the rude peoples beyond the Alps or filled the air with showers of Parthian arrows, he could, at least, regard the foe

as something outside the pale of his own civilization, and meet the storm of barbarians as a thing alien to himself like a storm of hail; but the philosopher of to-day must see in the present war a thing internecine. It is our own civilization which brings it forth: the civilization which we have learned proudly to speak of as Caucasian. It fills the world with problems, the like of which has never before been faced. The world still trembles with the shock of the fall of Rome; but was that great cataclysm as tremendous as this? We have been walking in what we thought was light and out of it comes this eclipse of the great Illumination which we fondly thought was to burn forever, or until it might perhaps be put out by some extinguishment from outside. "If, therefore, the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness."

Nothing is ever to be again as it was; and among the things that must be re-examined and reconsidered is the matter of rural life in the United States. Suddenly, before we knew it, the famine of the world came upon us—not with pallid skeletons lining our roadsides, and riots of hungry people in our streets—at least not as yet—but with indubitable scarcity, exhibited first in prices so high that the poorest of our poor could not buy the necessities of life, and latterly in actual shortages of important articles of food, houses without sugar or flour, a Food Administration urging upon us essential economies, a general recognition of the fact that the difference between us and the Chinese is les-

sened by the fact that a greater and greater proportion of our thoughts, too, are beginning to relate to food, a universal agreement on the rising importance of agriculture, its proper organization, and the betterment of rural conditions.

Shall we ever go back to the easy plenty of old? Never, I think. The nation is overurbanized—and so is the world. The mighty fabric of city, town and village life is built on too small a foundation of crops, fields, herds and gardens. It is not so much the foundation which, in such a case, is endangered, as the superstructure. We should regard it as an evidence of national decay if there should set in a period of decline among the least fortunately situated of our cities; and in this we should be correct. The overdeveloped thing is the thing which decays first. Yet such decay must surely come unless the agriculture of the United States is placed upon a better basis. Great manufacturing and trading cities can not persist when agriculture languishes; for they are driven further and further afield for agricultural support until they are brought within the sweep of crushing competition, and finally lose ground and collapse. The decay of New England's agriculture sends her to the Mississippi Valley for food. Her factory workers must pay in higher cost of living the expense of thus foraging so far from home. Her employers must pay the workers in higher wages, or impose on them a lower standard of living—and in either case the cities of New England suffer in the greater

and greater difficulty which they encounter in maintaining themselves on their present plane of splendor and magnificence. And New England is only one of the first regions to feel the strain. Other districts follow, until the genius of industrial efficiency finally commits suicide by having so engrossed the energies of the nation as to have enfeebled the vital processes upon which the prosperity of industry rests. The hand has been so active that the mouth has been forgotten.

In this book is offered after the outbreak of war a survey of the problems of rural life in the United States, made as if we were at peace. Whatever value it may have possessed for peace times is believed to be doubled during and after the war. If in the ancient times before 1914 the country people found it desirable to leave the farms and go to the cities, they find it still more desirable now. If the loss of the young men from the farms was a thing to be deplored then, how much worse is it now when of those who remained hundreds of thousands have been received into and discharged from the army and navy, and the loss to the farms may yet reach millions? If the industries of the cities then tempted the country people from their homes, what shall we say of the situation now, when the unskilled laborer in the city receives higher wages than skilled artisans used to get?

The world has always despised and contemned the farmer. Every durable tyranny in the world has been founded as a matter of necessity on his subjugation.

Of the primitive industries which were in existence in the ages when the institutions were established out of which states grew, those only which concerned themselves with the produce of the soil were susceptible of any broad and comprehensive enslavement. One hunter could not enslave another. Every fisherman fished for himself. Piracy was able to enforce servitude only within its own ranks. But the nomadic stockman could and did entrust his accumulated capital in the form of animals to the care of slave labor, and from him the evil extended until servitude was the rule in all occupations. That democracy, for which we are fighting, is merely the struggle of mankind to shake off this servitude in all the multifarious forms which it has assumed—a contest which now has taken on the form of a death-struggle in the darkness 'twixt the old system and the Word.

When a New Yorker or a Chicagoan, or one of the citizens of any town or city in the United States, wishes to subject his fellows to the soft impeachment of lack of smartness or intelligence, he is quite likely to call him a farmer. This is pleasantry; but it follows a tendency which inheres in the language as is shown by the words "boor," which meant "farmer" before it meant cad; "carle," which once took in all peasants and then came to mean a low fellow; "churl," which goes from the soil to bad manners, like "boor"; "villain," who was once a man who belonged to a farm or villa, but now is any bad man; "yokel," once a farmer, but

now a "hick"; "pagan," from "paganus," a countryman; "heathen," a dweller among the heaths. To call a man on Forty-second Street a farmer is a soft impeachment, now; but if farm life is not ameliorated it may sometime become an actionable epithet, like "villain." It is no accident that any term which signifies a farmer or farm laborer in one century is likely to mean something despicable or ignorant or criminal the next. It means that our problem of rural life is as old as history; and that some at least of the factors that have destroyed agriculture in the past are still a part of the problem of building up a balanced society.

The American farmer has been perhaps the most influential agriculturist in the world. Under past conditions he was, when he chose to be, the ruling class in government; for he outnumbered all others. Land was potentially free to all comers, and landlordism had not appeared in America except in a form which made it a well-recognized stepping-stone from tenantry to independent farming. Now it has become an oppressive force which is establishing in our midst a peasantry more hopeless than that of most of the countries of Europe.

Fifty years ago the farmer boy who went to the city and became successful and great was a tradition of American literature. That tradition has almost disappeared. Nearly fifty per cent. of our farms are operated by tenants under a system which possesses none of the ameliorations which grew out of and sur-

vived the feudal system of Europe; and probably far more than half the farms of the country, if their values be considered, are embraced in the landlord-and-tenant system, since lands gravitate into the hands of the rich as soon as they become too precious to be owned by the poor. Not only are more than half the lands of the country, value considered, operated by country people who are working mainly for city people, but the tendency which has brought about this condition is operating year by year with accelerating force. In Germany the lands are owned by the farmers themselves, to a far greater extent. The food of Germany in this war is chiefly produced by farmers who own their own lands and love the farms as their permanent and hereditary homes. Our chance of a speedy victory would have been vastly increased if these conditions were reversed; and our prospect for the quick recovery of our industries and their permanent prosperity after the war would be far brighter.

Why do so many farmers leave the farm as soon as they become intelligent and progressive? Is it because of the inadequate returns to their industry? In part it is; but not, I think, altogether so. The American farmer has become unfitted for a life which historically enrolls the name by which he is called among the terms of reproach. He knows where the best opportunities are to be found for himself and his children, and he demands for his wife and children all the conveniences, the luxuries, the amusements, and

the privileges which are to be had anywhere—and they demand them for themselves. These are not to be found on the average American farm.

And yet, the life of the working farmer may be made to yield more of the opportunities of intellectual development, more of the things which enthrall and absorb, than the life of the average city worker. A new farm life is all that is required, a life the beginnings of which are to be found in existence almost everywhere. Give to farmers these things—things which are inherent in country life—and he will find himself living a life from which neither he nor his family will desire to escape. Such a life will even draw back to the land myriads of country-minded people from the cities. Such a life will build up our food supply, will make the basis of our city life wholesome and stable, will lay forever the ghost of famine which has come again to haunt us, will tend to re-establish again a proper proportion between urban and rural living in this nation. But it will do more: it will give to rural life that standing which it once had in America. It will give to country children better educations than city children can ever hope to have. It will make the country people proud of country life. For it will set them to the task of solving the most interesting and absorbing problems of the world—problems upon which their living depends.

People do not, because the rewards are meager, leave occupations which give them the consciousness of liv-

ing intellectual lives; and that consciousness ought to be present in the soul of every farmer in the land. It will be always in his mind when he sees as he will one day see that it takes a much abler man to be a successful farmer than to be a successful banker or lawyer. In the new days which will follow the war the making of a career for an intellectual man on every farm will be a thing well worthy of the attention of every sociologist and statesman. It is for the purpose of directing attention to such possibilities in farm life that this book has been written.

Soldiers, if they fight well, must be proud and happy. Our soldiers in France astonished the world by their wonderful morale. The story is yet to be told of the way in which this morale was kept up. This book is a plea for a better morale in rural life. With a better morale, our farmers will fight their battles to a victory which will amaze the world as our soldiers amazed it in France. In the absence of a better morale we face a future of continuing rural decay.

H. Q.

Federal Farm Loan Board.
Washington, D. C.

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# THE FAIRVIEW IDEA

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## CHAPTER I

### RETIRING FROM FAIRVIEW

IF a stranger should come into the Fairview neighborhood inquiring for the most eminent mossback in the countryside, I suppose that Abner Dunham would be pointed out to him. I am Abner Dunham. None of the neighbors would call me a mossback to my face, but the pointing out would be done all the same. My old neighbor, John Ackerman, for instance, would drive out to the farm, and presenting the stranger to me would say: "Abner, here's a gentleman from Chicago who wants to meet you."

I don't consider myself a mossback. My motto is:

> Be not the first by whom the new is tried,
> Nor yet the last to lay the old aside.

And I recognize the fact that it may be considered a proof of mossbackism that I quote Alexander Pope as his couplets appeared in the old reader I studied in the district school—and from memory. And yet it is a

good motto. I was not the first, by any means, to try that new mode of locomotion, the automobile; neither the last to cast aside the horse and buggy. And yet it was that very automobile episode that fastened on me the copper-riveted title of the neighborhood mossback.

It was this way: I waited several years, so that others might invest in the experimental cars of the era of trying things out, and then I bought a good car. I waited until I had sold a consignment of three carloads of fat steers and had the cash, and then I took the car home with me. I suppose if I had mortgaged the farm, or gone without a silo, or put off the building of the big barn for the sake of the car, I should have won the name of being an up-to-date "feller"; but I didn't. I bought the car for cash, and I soon began to like running it; but after a man has been driving horses, and good horses, too, for thirty years every day of his life, he has acquired certain nervous reflexes which go with scooting through the country, and with me one of those reflexes was the use of the whip. I didn't feel as if I were driving unless I had a whip within reach. It marred the enjoyment I was entitled to from a pretty heavy investment, and so I had a whip-socket put on the dash of the car and carried a whip in it.

I was the butt of a good deal of good-natured fun, and my family objected to the whip. When our picture appeared in a Chicago paper in the big touring car with a whip in the socket, at about the time my youngest son came home from the agricultural college, the

whip was taken off the equipage. I had got so I could get along without it pretty comfortably anyhow. People didn't understand why I did it; but my reason for the whip was a good one, quite personal to myself. In proving me to be a mossback, however, that whip affair is always the first bit of evidence introduced, marked Exhibit A and made a part of the record. I don't care.

Exhibit B is the fact that, though I have a section of good land and plenty of money with which I could build a home in the county seat and live on my rent and interest, I still refuse to retire from the farm and the Fairview neighborhood. I have good reasons for that eccentric course too.

John Ackerman's father and mine drove into the country together in 1857, and John and I were boys together. Herman Lutz's father was a Hanoverian immigrant who arrived with Herman and the rest of the Lutzes—so far as they had arrived on the scene—a few years later. Herman wore wooden shoes to school, and once John and I, finding that we couldn't lick Herman, outran him. Whereupon he threw his wooden shoes at us. We put stones in them and sunk them in the swimming hole at the bend of the little brook which ran so clear and pure through the prairie grass then, and is such an uninteresting ditch with mud banks now, with black corn ground on both sides. So, you see, we knew each other pretty well. And Frank and Bill Raymond and Al McAllister moved in; and then quite suddenly, as it seems in looking back at it,

the rest of the neighborhood filled in with the development of the country, until we could no longer drive kittering-ways across the prairie to town, but had to follow the section lines to keep off the crops, first a part of the way and finally all the time. That marked the period when the country was "settled up."

Nobody in those days had any thought of going to town to live and becoming "retired farmers." We expected to be farmers all our lives. That's what we had come west for. We could have moved to town back east.

And now that the Fairview neighborhood has been so radically changed by the process of the best and most substantial families in it ceasing to be farmers and becoming "retired" farmers, I think it may be worth your while to look over the whole case and see whether I am right, or John Ackerman and Herman Lutz's folks—and the McAllisters and the Raymonds, and the Smiths, Browns, Joneses and Robinsons of Pleasant Valley District, and Lincoln Center and Pious Ridge, and all the other rural communities of which I have any knowledge.

We all worked hard before we got above farming, and were proud of how much we could do. I guess it's always that way in a new country—the very newness of it seems to put energy into people. It may be it's because only the strongest and most venturesome are willing to be pioneers, but I believe that when any man gets up against raw nature, out where he can make nobody hear when he calls for help, he's going to show

the best there is in him—or the worst—and will probably find a good deal in himself of one kind or another that he didn't know was there. And I don't believe it brought out the worst as a rule. I am of a generation skilled "to pitch new states as Old-World men pitch tents." They have turned out in my time to be good states, full of the spirit which will one of these days make of all this nation a greater New England—full of her mentality without her narrowness, and gifted with the southern talent for graciousness and gallantry, and the breadth of mind and freedom from political and economic superstitions of the frontier.

We boys stayed on the newly established farms as a matter of course. We had always expected to do so. Somehow cities didn't attract country boys then as they do now. Perhaps it was because they were farther away, or harder to reach, or our disposition to drift had not yet been developed.

We even had our farm songs, in which the beauties of farm life were tunefully set forth. I remember one, of which our girls used to sing the refrain, which ran: "So a farmer's wife I'll be, I'll be, I'll be!" And another in which it was declared: "One of these country lasses is worth a score of your city girls." And I'll state this right here: we shall never again have a healthy rural life until we have back again the feeling that it is the best life, and that the farm people are the best people. I wish we could have that feeling back again, and the crude, rude old songs, instead of "I Want You, My Baby, I Do!" or "Stay Down Where You

Belong." I want people to stay up where they belong instead. But then, as I have said, I am the classic mossback of our county.

If the boys of those days went away anywhere it was farther west, where land was cheaper and opportunities seemed bigger. But for most of us the place that we had selected for a home seemed about as good as anything else and a good deal handier, and we acted accordingly.

Herman Lutz, for instance, married young, as most of our German immigrants did, and for a number of years his wife worked with him in the field. While the children were young Herman hired a girl to take care of them, and Mrs. Lutz kept on doing a man's work. She said she'd rather do that than the housework, and, considering the home, I really can't blame her. Besides, if she had kept in the house they'd have had to hire a man, and hired girls were cheaper than hired men. When the children were big enough they took their mother's place in the field and she took the hired girl's place in the house. Nobody thought less of her for this field work—that is, nobody in her circle of friends. Among us Yankees the German habit of working women in the fields was the sure mark of the "Old Countryman." We didn't even allow our women to milk the cows. The McAllisters were Hoosiers, and among them the women "pailed" the cows as a matter of course. Old Ebenezer McAllister used to say that among the Injuns the women did all the work, among the Hoosiers it was equally divided, and among the

Yankees the men did it all. Thus we were originally divided into racial and sectional groups in the Fairview settlement and were not yet knit into a people. Now we have all become one — Lutzes, McAllisters and Ackermans have become one people.

None of them milk cows any more or work in the field. The acres that once knew them know them no more except as rack-renting landlords. They have become Typical Americans, with the pavements instead of the furrows under their feet. And I think a part of this exodus of the farmers from the farms may be accounted for by Herman Lutz's domestic economy for it truly was economy, and in a way domestic. Herman certainly got more work done at less expense than any of his neighbors, but, as my wife used to say, his establishment was a factory, not a family. The daughter, who was third in the order of arrival, came nearer doing a man's work than any girl ought to. Herman used to say she was the only one who could drop corn straight enough so it could be plowed both ways when it came up. That was before people had begun to use the wire check-rower planters very much, and still laid off the ground with plank markers, and dropped the corn by pulling a lever as the horses drew the planter across the marks. Kate could drop a field of corn as pretty as a checkerboard; but I guess Herman would have gladly plowed out every other hill in his fields if he'd known what a mistake he was making with his children. When I married my wife I told her that if the time should come when we couldn't make

a living without her working in the field we'd starve together. We're both alive to-day, and I believe you'd call us pretty well fed. Neither of my girls ever worked in the field either. They've wanted to try it, but the idea never appealed to me. I believe in division of labor on the farm, and I'm just mossback enough to think that women's work is round the house.

My wife picked up that last sheet and read it. "Much you know about it," says she. "Many a day when I've been nearly crazy with the loneliness and monotony of housework it would have been a real kindness to me if I could have gone out and raked hay or driven the binder—out where the men were. That's what women want and need—to work with men." Well, I can't stop to reply to that now. Perhaps none of us knows all about this matter of keeping the folks on the farm.

As Herman's family grew up his prosperity grew accordingly. He figured that boys and girls who went to school in the winter might as well be of some use to their parents in the rush season, and, besides, if they worked less than fourteen hours a day they'd get lazy and never be any good. Herman didn't suspect such a thing; but it was by this very system of building up a sheet anchor of property by which he meant to hold the Lutz family to the farm that he was generating a wind of discontent that would eventually sweep them from their moorings in Fairview. All his children were good workers, and it's hard to tell how much they saved for him; but did they ever see any of it?

If they did, they never showed it. They always had plenty to eat and enough clothing, such as it was, but none of them had a bank-account. I could see that the children felt their lack of good clothes when in company; and Herman himself went round looking as if two dollars would jingle in his pocket like a kicking jackass in a tin stable. Anybody could see that his daughter was a little inclined to think small of her father. Economy is all right and work is good for boys; but they ought to be given some greater interest in it than simply living from one day to the next.

By the time the oldest Lutz boy was of age Herman's farm was one of the best in the neighborhood. The barns and feed yards and hog houses were as fine and up-to-date as any I ever saw. He had two silos that people came from the next county to see. His cattle were the pride of the community, and he wouldn't have an animal on the place that wasn't pedigreed. But just when things looked at their best the two oldest boys pulled up stakes and went to Chicago. Herman did his best to persuade them to stay with him in his old age, but it was too late then. They had been with him too long in his prime.

When they left he gave them some money and told them he hoped they'd soon be back. Herman wasn't consciously mean; not a bit of it; he was just illogical. He was applying to a fifty-thousand-dollar estate the logic of that boyhood time when Herman and his father used to shell the corn fed to the stock—shell it laboriously by hand—so as to save the cobs for fuel.

We lose our boys and girls to the cities by thousands by just such survivals of hardscrabble logic.

The boys weren't pikers by any means, and they didn't come back as Herman expected they would. That's the trouble—the boys don't come back. That's why the settled farming districts in our best states are losing farm population. The boys don't come back when we old fathers drive them to town.

For two years Herman worked the place with young Adolph and a succession of hired men. Then he rented it and moved to town, and the glory began to depart from the Israel of the Lutz farm. It was virgin prairie when Herman first saw it, so rich that its fertility seemed endless. No German ever abuses the soil —his own soil, I mean; not the soil of his victims— as some other people do, but, of course, there was some soil robbery in the Lutz farming. There must be in a new country. Herman, however, had steadily improved the condition of his land since about 1890— which was the low point of fertility in many of our farms about here. He adopted a rotation then, and when the farm was rented it was growing better wheat and better corn than it did in 1857. When he rented it he did what all American landlords do—he made a year-by-year-lease, which amounts to a criminal conspiracy entered into between owner and tenant to rob the land. And the farm shows it now—but I can't tell you about that. It's another story. Yet under the circumstances I don't blame Herman for moving. Hired men were hard for him to get along with. After a

while he began hiring every hobo that applied, and firing him as occasion arose, usually in about a week. More than one hired with him Saturday night and left before the cows were milked Monday morning. After two years of this the place had already lost some of its well-kept appearance, to say nothing of its earning capacity.

I like to set forth the case of Herman Lutz with some particularity—it is so typical of the town-going family which after a quarter of a century of prosperous industry is lost to rural life because of rising standards of wealth and no standards at all of either enjoyment or culture. Another reason for his retiring from the Fairview neighborhood was his wife's poor health. Although Herman didn't realize it, years of hard work had been too much for her—field work, housework, children and all. Every day she had carried many buckets of water from the well, and if the windmill didn't happen to be going she had pumped it herself. Herman had built a concrete drinking tank for the cattle; all they had to do was to come and drink what they wanted. But for the woman who was his partner in life he had provided nothing but an iron pump handle and a gravel path.

As far as their house was concerned, it was a collection of additions built round the old house reared by Herman's father when he settled on the place. No two rooms had the same floor level, and some of the doors were so low that Herman had learned by long experience to duck every time he went through them,

He had money enough to build the finest farmhouse in the county; but he was so busy farming that he hadn't the time to build a home in which he and his family could be comfortable. A man does not feel the need of a good house as much as a woman does; he doesn't have to work in it.

Herman lives at the county seat now, and spends his time talking with John Ackerman and the other retired farmers there about the ungratefulness of sons and the worthlessness of hobo help. I've made a study of these former neighbors of mine, and of Herman and John Ackerman's cases in particular. I run my car round to his desirable residence almost every time I go to town; and I think I know just about how much convenience Herman has found in city conveniences, and pretty near what measure of comfort in town comforts.

The history of his efforts to be happy is pathetic to my mind. At first he tried to make his surroundings as much like the farm as possible, but he found this rather hard to do on a city lot. He hated to give up his back-yard pigpen; those fat, friendly hogs were a link that connected him with his old life. But when his neighbors began to make it as unpleasant for him as the pigs made it for them, he gave in, just in time to escape being arrested for maintaining a nuisance, and took up bee culture. Some of his fellow suburbanites kicked on the bees too, but Herman vowed he'd law 'em to the Supreme Court before he would be dictated to, and I guess bee law is with him. He still keeps

the bees and gets lots of pleasure out of them, but I'll bet he gets lonesome for the cattle and the hogs and the big Percherons of which he used to be so proud.

He is sending Adolph and the girl to the academy at the county seat, and I'm sorry for them both. Adolph doesn't seem to know what to make of his classmates or of himself. He wants to be a hot little sport like some of the boys he knows there, but he isn't built that way. I've seen him standing on a corner with a bunch of them, watching the girls go by, and he looked out of place and uncomfortable, uncertain what he ought to do with his hands and unable to think of any flip remarks such as the others were so free with. Sometimes he gets a cigar and goes away alone and smokes it, as a kind of sacred duty, I guess. Adolph never can be a sport, but he has all the chances in the world to make a fool of himself, and that's what the sports generally do after all. Only they do it with a manner and style that in a mysterious way seem to constitute some sort of compensation for the inevitable losses incident to the business of being a sport.

The pity of it is that Adolph Lutz is handicapped by the fact that, with all due allowance for the narrowness of his farm life, he was started right. He was a good country mouse. If he could have had half of the privileges his father could have given him right on the farm, with no expense that would have been perceptible to the Lutz pocketbook, he would have been a very good fair-to-middling citizen, and would have turned off more good food for the nation than two of

the shiftless tenants who eke out an existence on the Lutz acres. I don't see for my part what good Adolph, with the money he will one day possess and no knack for either spending it or using it, can do in town.

Herman's second son came home last week broke, and got a job in a livery stable. The oldest is still in Chicago, driving a dray. Both of these occupations are honest, if not exalted. They demand in the city those qualities of horsemanship and animal husbandry which every farm boy learns as a part of his second nature. Therefore they are the natural urban occupations for such boys as these. But they don't constitute city success. They are not things to be exactly proud of. They do not mark an advance in the world from the busy, respectable and increasingly profitable life on the old Lutz farm. A family has started down the hill to a status lower than the old peasanthood from which out of Germany the Lutzes emerged sixty years ago; and half a section of magnificent land has started back to a status of fertility lower than that of the days when the buffalo grazed it. That isn't what I call conservation of the national resources—it is merely retiring from Fairview.

So much for the Lutz experiment. Now let us see about the experiences of some of the other neighbors—John Ackerman's family, for instance. When John Ackerman, a year later than the retirement of Herman Lutz, moved to town, he left one of the best farms in the neighborhood. You wonder why I use the same words to describe the places deserted by each of these

owners? It is just because the owners of the best farms are the very ones who can become retired farmers. Look over any rural neighborhood in the United States, and you will find the farms in the hands of tenants just in proportion to their ability to support both a tenant and a family in town, living in whole or in part on the rents.

I sometimes think that if our farms were not so rich and productive hereabouts it would be better for all hands; and I look forward with some disquietude of spirit to the time when by neglect and soil robbery these lands will cease to produce enough to give the town-dweller returns that will make their ownership desirable to him. By that time the migrating families will be domesticated and wonted in the town, and won't come back. The tenants will not be able to buy the lands and build up the soil. I wonder if great proprietors, possessing the ability and the capital to work hired help and tenants on some system of making profits from exhausted soils, by building them up or by completing their robbery, will not develop and fill the land with those great *latifundia,* as the Romans called them, or great estates which, some Latin writer says, ruined Rome. With a cheap enough kind of labor, and tenants living on a low enough plane, I can see how great fortunes might be made in fifty years from now by such huge *haciendados* out of the completion of the ruin of the Corn-Belt States.

John Ackerman and his family, when he retired from Fairview, left as good and comfortable a house

as the one he bought in town. They moved for the sake of the children, they said, and it was a perfectly good reason. The children did need better educational facilities than we then had in Fairview—though, according to things some of the students and professors in the colleges themselves say right out in print, the value of a college education over just ordinary schooling is doubtful. The Ackerman children had absorbed about all they could get from our rural school, and they wanted to go on. And nowadays children seem to think they must have the intellectual coddling of instructors in high school and college if they are to make mental progress.

John was glad they wanted to make something of themselves, as he said, to distinguish what they were to be from what he and I were. When I said they'd be darned lucky if they made anything better of themselves in the town from what a lot of boys had become on the black soil of Fairview, he said I was a mossback.

"Are any of them going to study agriculture, John?" I asked.

"No," said he, "they all seem to be pretty well fed up on agriculture on the farm. That's what they're all running away from."

Running away from the very thing their grandfathers and grandmothers pierced forests, forded rivers, dared Indians and wild animals, and bore tornado, blizzard and drought, dearth and poverty, to seek and find! Strangest transformation of a people in two

generations ever seen, I guess; and one in which future historians will find some meaning, though we don't seem to.

John was proud of his children, and his wife was still prouder, and wanted to give them the best possible chance. They thought the right way to do this was to let each of them choose his life-work. When children are too immature to choose their clothes or their food we think them perfectly capable of selecting their wives, husbands and occupations. Just why they are supposed to possess exceptional wisdom along those lines I never could see, yet perhaps it is all right. But why did John Ackerman refuse or neglect in every possible way to try making agriculture, as they call farming in the college, attractive to his children?

They all knew well enough that it was moderately profitable—their father had made his money by it. John never was stingy with them either. But as for handling the place, John did it himself and didn't discuss matters with anybody. He made a success of it, but he let the children's imaginations get away from it.

Now to me there's more real romance in farming than in anything else I know about. Handling a farm is a big thing, and it takes just as big a man to do it as to handle any business proposition. The trouble with the Ackerman boys was that they saw only the details, and a good many of the details and daily jobs are not very thrilling, and some of them are dirty. Working day by day without a big idea behind you gets monotonous, and that was the trouble with those

boys. John felt the bigness of it, but I suppose it would have embarrassed him to mention it. He assumed that the boys couldn't help feeling it, and that's right where he made his mistake. It's easy to see glamour in something far away; you can't see the little petty things about it. But to see the romance of something near at hand you must see through and over the little things; and that may be hard to do, especially if you've grown up right among these same little things and had them to contend with every day.

My father experienced something like that back east before he came to Fairview. He had been obliged to contend so long with the brush and sprouts that threatened to overrun the fields that he had forgotten the beauty of the trees. I've heard him tell how glad he was, when he got here, to find that there was no clearing to be done; but ever since I can remember the old trees have had their places about our old farmstead. Father planted them and tended them until they were established. He got lonesome without trees. They were a part of his life, and in his old age they were like comrades to him.

John Ackerman's boys began to talk as if they were fated to feel like that about the farm. They are doing fairly well in town; but one of them told me the other day, when he filled a tooth for me, that he'd like to be back where the air is clean, the fields big, and a mile is a mile and not fourteen blocks. John may come back himself. I believe he would if it weren't for his wife and daughters. We have two back-to-the-landers—city

people who are re-learning the occupation their forefathers deserted for the factory business—right in our district; and John told me the other day that it seemed a little queer to him that good farmers are moving to the city, where they are no good in the world, to leave openings for city people who are no good on the farms.

I can't see myself how this helps out in making our national life efficient. We manage all the time in such a way as to have the greatest number of people in both town and country who are greenhorns on their jobs or who hate the life they are living. Thus we trade off great masses of producers from places where they are relatively efficient into places where they are relatively and often absolutely inefficient. At the same time I have more admiration for the spirit of the back-to-the-landers than for the retired farmers; but I am the neighborhood mossback, you must remember.

John Ackerman bought a house in a good suburb and did his best to take things easy. But John isn't that kind. He can't loaf. Unlike Herman Lutz, John knew, or thought he knew, that country standards and city standards were different; that he must do as the Romans did. But he just couldn't help trying to make his place as much like the farm as he could. He brought in his light team and buggy, but they weren't enough. The place didn't look right without a wagon somewhere round. He might need a wagon for something some time anyway, so he brought one in and set it in the side yard. This didn't appeal to Mrs. Ackerman and the girls. Wagons under the dining-room

windows might not do any harm, but the neighbors didn't have them, and they made the place look countrified. That was the beginning of the end of John's efforts to have his rural atmosphere about him in town. Anything he brought from the farm was promptly sent back or stored in the attic. One day he brought a grindstone and some dull sickles, and after supper, when the air was cool, went to work grinding them up in the front yard, where the water was handy from the hose. The hiss of that stone on the knives was music to John's ears, but it had no charm for his oldest daughter, who was entertaining a young lawyer on the front porch. John didn't grind any more sickles.

The next thing he tried was the real-estate business. He built a little ten-by-twelve office next to a suburban grocery store, got himself made a notary public, sat down and hoped for business. He made a few deals of small importance and then gave it up. It was too much like loafing to suit an energetic, middle-aged man who was used to work. His health began to fail.

One day I went in and found him covering a vacant lot with lath sheds. He said rather sheepishly that he was going to raise ginseng and make as much money off that lot as he had off his whole farm. He gave me a lot of catalogues and folders about the stuff, and I read some of them but didn't start raising ginseng. It would be a shame to get rich so quick. John was rather happy with his ginseng bed until he found that he was losing money. He wasn't working for exer-

cise; he wanted the returns to which he was accustomed.

So he got a job in a binder twine factory at a dollar and a half a day. A fine job for a man with the brains and training of John Ackerman! John's steers had topped the Chicago market so often that he'd come to regard it as the only natural thing; and there he was, doing an unskilled laborer's work for a dollar and a half a day!

The family objected quite strenuously when John took the job. They didn't want him to be a common laborer. John contended that it was all right if he came and went by the back door and the alley, so none of the girls' beaux could see him in his overalls; and that is what he did. It was funny to see him snooping home in the evening and diving into the back door as if somebody was after him.

He quit this job after a few months, and now he has fenced up the back yard and is raising chickens according to some system by which you can rear about forty to the square foot. He hasn't been at it long enough yet to find out for himself, but I'm glad whenever I talk with him that I've plenty of ground for my chickens to prospect round upon.

John isn't happy and he isn't well. Old farmers seldom do well physically in town. When the Livermore family left their farm and went to town they had an old cattle dog named Shep which they couldn't bear to leave behind. He had been a dog worth fifty dollars

of any man's money on a stock farm, and was as active and industrious a dog as I ever saw. He lived about eight months in town—died of changed environment. I have observed that the old farmers who "retired" first when the retiring fever struck the country are mostly dead or in bad health. They have gone the way of Livermore's Shep. I wish we had statistics on this; but Uncle Henry Wallace once said that in his opinion retired farmers live on the average about four years after they strike the pavements. I don't think this is a particularly heroic way to die, but then I'm the official mossback of the neighborhood.

The Ackerman boys are doing well in town. Henry took the philosophical course at the academy, and is now pastor of a little church in the suburbs. He has good stuff in him, and a lot of advanced notions which look pretty good to me when he imparts them in private conversation, even if they are too radical to please the one man who really owns the church—including Henry.

"Did you ever," said I to Henry, while he was still in the academy, "hear the old Sunday-school song which ran:

" 'Far out upon the prairies how many children dwell
Who never go to meeting or hear a Sabbath bell?' "

"No," said he; "I don't think it is sung any more."

"It was in your father's day," said I. "It was written by people in the East to call attention to the need of missionary work for your father and me and Frank

and Bill McAllister and Al Raymond—little children who lived far out upon the prairies. But we had better church facilities in Fairview then than we have now. All the smart young preachers seem to be looking for a call to a big rich city church. Eighteen million rural churches in the United States died last year, and—"

"I am afraid, Mr. Dunham," said Henry, "that you have been misinformed." He smiled a little at my joke, and added: "But I know that the rural church is dying apparently. It is a sad and perplexing thing."

"Not at all perplexing," I answered. "The rural church is dying of an epidemic of Ackerman removals. Every time I come to town I pass by the field of the slothful and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding; and lo! nettles cover the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof is broken down. It's your father's farm and your natural parish I'm mentioning, Henry." And he went away sorrowful, for he had much ambition.

That was before Daisy Raymond came back to Fairview with her new preacher husband and did things in the vineyard—but that's a story in itself. She's Old Mule Raymond's great-granddaughter. He was called Mule Raymond because he drove mules into the country while my father was driving oxen. Daisy's father is Professor Wilfred Raymond of the state university, the son of Al Raymond who used to snare gophers with me as a boy; but she and her husband, whose name is Wiggins, have retired from the city church—he's the Reverend Frank Wiggins—to take

over Henry Ackerman's bit of abandoned church territory. And that also is another story.

Will Ackerman is an extremely practical boy and is doing well. He's gone into dentistry and is making good money for a man just starting in. He ought to have his office equipment paid for in a couple of years, besides making a living. Hans Larsen, the Danish immigrant who works the Ackerman farm, will by that time have skinned enough out of it to make the first payment on a farm of his own.

Both the Ackerman girls were graduated from the academy, went to the state normal school and are teachers. They teach in small city schools at the edge of town that look for all the world like country schools, but are not half so attractive as is the Fairview Consolidated School since we joined the Fairview, Pleasant Valley, Hickory Grove, Grant Center, Wheeler's Crossroads and Indian Ridge schools and made them one—in a building that is big enough for a town school. And yet the Ackerman girls, whose life blood was drawn from Fairview acres, don't seem to think of the old neighborhood as a place to teach in if they are going to teach, or marry in if they are going to get married. They have their eyes turned toward the big school in the city. It seems to me that such girls are missing a great opportunity for helping country communities. They are two fine, healthy, country-trained girls trying to educate children with semi-rural surroundings in schools which are forced to conform to city school models; while New York City is working

on a plan to transport her children out into the country every day to get education from just such surroundings as those which the Ackerman girls ignore! Maybe the school authorities make them do this, and perhaps they have to be inefficient to hold their jobs; but even so the situation is the same.

The trouble is, teachers prefer to stay in town where they can have more pleasant associations outside of school. I'll admit that most of our conventionally miseducated girls feel more at home in town than in the country, but it isn't the fault of the country; it's the fault of their education and of the farmers who retire and take their educated families to town. Fairview neighborhood isn't what it was when all the old settler' sons were here. Tenant farmers on the whole don't do a community much good. If they were the right sort they wouldn't be tenants very long. They move on from place to place, robbing the soil of all the fertility they can force out of it, raising their families any way at all, and contributing nothing to the community.

I am afraid my readers may think that I regard rural life in America as a total loss with no insurance; but that would be a mistake. There is a great principle in human affairs, as in physics, that action is equal to reaction and in the opposite direction. After the Revolution comes the Restoration; after the Republic the Monarchy, after Napoleon the Bourbons; after the Bourbons the Republic again. A reaction is already setting in. The rural districts will be redeemed, I be-

lieve, and rural life will win back the people as a whole-life proposition, instead of a status to be fled from as soon as the fetters of necessity are knocked off.

The county-agent movement—we're just in the midst of getting it started in Fairview—will show country people how to be happy though farming. The new kind of rural school, which is coming in so fast, will bring up a generation of children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord who has given them the most interesting lot of things to learn and do in the country that exist anywhere in the world. The new kind of rural church will make more of the text, "Consider the lilies how they grow." Some writer has said that our grains are modified lilies; but whether that is the fact or not, I suspect that the Lord meant all plants, including corn and beans and potatoes, when He mentioned lilies.

The telephone will help, and so will better machinery, and cooperation among the farmers in working out their various problems; and the motor-car will do more than anything else. For the motor-car gives good roads, and command of a dozen towns, while city residence gives you only one.

I think, in other words, that Herman Lutz, John Ackerman, the Raymonds, the McAllisters, the Livermores and all the others who have retired from Fairview went at the wrong time. They mistook the twilight before sunrise for the glooming fall of night. The days of the pioneers are not over. Neither are the

times which call for missionaries "far out upon the prairies" and in the farming districts generally. We must grow our pioneers and our missionaries, as we grow our crops, right on the spot—and in the Fairview District we are doing it.

I may be a little uplifted, as Old Man McAllister used to say in his Scotch way, by what took place in the little auditorium of our new schoolhouse last evening. We had a moving-picture show, a lecture, a meeting of our Fairview Club and a supper. Frank Wiggins, the teacher of the school, the county agent and all our new people who are helping us to remake our neighborhood life were there—everybody and his wife and children—and John Ackerman came out from town.

"Abner," said he, "I'm going to bring Eliza out to the next meeting. And if we can persuade her to force me to move back to the farm, it will be all right with me."

That's the nearest I ever knew John Ackerman to come to an admission that he had been wrong.

## CHAPTER II

### A CORN-BELT PIONEER—1918 MODEL

DID I mention in that piece about "Retiring from Fairview" the fact that Daisy Raymond Wiggins had brought her husband up from the state university and that they had begun reliving the pioneer life of her grandfather and great-grandfather right here in the Fairview neighborhood? I did? Well, now I'm going to tell you all about it.

Her grandfather, Ezra M. Raymond, was older than my father, and came to the settlement with some pretty good chunks of boys before we did—about '53 or '54 I think it was. We drove in with oxen two or three years behind them, but Old Mule Raymond, as Ezra was called as long as he lived, because he came in with mules, had more sense than we had. My father bought land along the river because it had timber on it. Mule Raymond took up his out on the prairies because it had none. We spent ten years grubbing timber land before it dawned upon us that Mule Raymond had done as much in the way of making a farm on the prairie in two years as we had done in ten, and had better land. Then we sold out to an Indiana man who was used to roots and stumps and couldn't be happy unless he was tussling with them, and bought

land alongside the Raymond farm—and paid six dollars for it when we might have had it when we moved in for a dollar and a quarter.

That man Knickerbocker, who wrote a history of New York, tells, as a joke on the Dutch, that they pretty near had to give up settling on Manhattan Island because it didn't seem to be any fit place for a town. It almost looked as if they had robbed the Indians out of something not worth stealing. They hunted and hunted for a place fit for a townsite, and weren't satisfied until at last they found one low enough so that they had to build dykes along shore to keep out the tide. Then they hopped to it in a leisurely sort of way. I believe the story is true. It's just the same thing the early settlers did in the prairie states. They hunted for land encumbered with brush and timber because they were used to timber and brush. I believe if they could have found rocks they would have been happier—but they couldn't. And right before their eyes were those broad prairies of black soil far richer than the timber lands, and all ready for the plow!

Mule Raymond was eccentric in two things: he preferred mules to oxen because they were faster, and to horses because they were tougher, and he preferred rich land ready to plow to fair-to-middling land which had to be reclaimed. It took him a quarter of a century to outlive these twin disgraces.

Al and Frank Raymond were neighbor boys of ours, but older than I. This did not prevent us from being

good friends and playmates; but it cut short our fun when Al, who was the one I liked best, got married at the age of nineteen. Why not? He had earned enough working for Foster Livermore to pay for a team and wagon, and could buy all the land he wanted on grain payments—and Zeruiah Livermore was willing to have him. So they were married. His first child was named Wilfrid Livermore Raymond, and he is a professor of something related to geology or archæology at the state university, now. I am told that he knows all there is to know about his specialty. There's everything in heredity, but when I think of Old Mule Raymond and Doctor Wilfred Raymond, his grandson, I am convinced that it is better seen by hindsight than foresight.

Naturally we had seen very little of Doctor Raymond in the Fairview neighborhood for years. We are not a scholastic people. He and his wife used to rusticate among us once in a while during vacations and between his voyages to foreign parts; and once he came all the way from the university to address us on the occasion of our great Homecoming Week, when half the crowd was composed of retired farmers who flocked back from the cities and towns to see one another and us, and to find out just how badly rundown their farms were getting. That time they had with them a little daughter about eight years old, who took quite a shine to me, and called me Uncle Abner. She and I spent an hour in my feed yards looking at the steers.

She looked to me to be about ten years old when she brought her husband to see me—but they look younger to me now than they used to.

"Mr. Dunham," she said.

"What's become of your Uncle Abner?" I inquired.

"I hope he's well," she giggled. "Do you remember about that?"

"I never forget anything," said I; "and the neighbors some of them say I never learn anything."

"Well," said Daisy, "you're going to learn something right now. I'm going to present to you my husband, Frank Wiggins, and he's the most knowledgiferous person in the world."

"I'm glad to meet you," said I,—"you cradle robber!"

Daisy giggled again, and looked as pleased as Punch. He wasn't very mad, either. My wife came out and we had them in to dinner. He was a puzzle to me at first. I don't know but he is yet. He was pretty well dressed and looked to be about thirty. My wife informed me after they went away that Daisy would be twenty-six the twenty-seventh day of the next December. How they remember such things is past me. Wiggins was a clean, hard, brown-looking customer with a mild eye, a beard which he keeps about at a two-weeks growth, and a stocky build. I should say he would have weighed a hundred and seventy-five and was five feet ten. He was just the man for build that I have always liked to get for farm hands. I was a little taken aback when he told me in answer to my query as to his busi-

ness that he was a preacher, but was looking for a job. I had sized him up for a real-estate man or a life insurance agent, or possibly when I noticed those mild eyes, one of the newer breed of college professors that like to be called Smith instead of Doctor. He was a good single-handed talker, but wasn't talky. I noticed that when he spoke he generally said something, but he never used ministerial lingo. In fact, he more than once dropped into that sort of just-folks language that lots of starchy people call slang. That's why I was a little surprised when he said he was a preacher—but you never can tell nowadays.

"Where do you think of locating?" my wife asked.

"In the missionary field," said he.

"It's a noble field," replied my wife, giving me thereby a sly dig, for I have always been a tightwad when they begin to sing about Greenland's icy mountain and India's coral strand. It always seemed to me that we are pretty short on practical Christianity right here in the Corn Belt, not to mention Chicago. "But," went on Mrs. Dunham, "it would be a great cross to me to send a daughter of mine across the seas to where they have leprosy and jaguars and cobras and kill their little girl babies. I should feel that I'd given everything to the Lord, and would never expect to see her alive again."

"What cobra country," I inquired, "do you expect to locate in?"

"Well," said Wiggins, kind of dry like, "we think the Fairview neighborhood is about the jungle for us."

"You see, Uncle Abner," said Daisy, bursting in while my wife and I were all aback and our sails flapping, "Frank was a classmate of Henry Ackerman, and when Henry told him that he had been much troubled at what you told Henry about the Ackermans and Raymonds and Lutzes and Livermores and all the rest of us deserting the Fairview neighborhood and retiring to the cities and towns just as though the soil we grew up out of wasn't good enough to stay on, I just told Frank that it was my soil just as much as Henry Ackerman's—and it was just the sort of thing we'd been wanting to do all the time. And so here we are, Uncle Abner, on your hands, and you've just got to put your shoulder to the wheel and boost!"

"The country church is dying," said Wiggins, "just because we preachers haven't sense enough to do anything but preach, and for the additional reason that instead of curing the home-grown evils we have, we prefer to fly to others that we know not of."

"If we are to endure things for the cause," said Daisy, "why not endure them right here?"

"And save traveling expenses," put in Frank.

"And cut out the Afric's sunny fountains rolling down their golden sand business," I injected, looking at my wife.

"But, my dear," said my wife, "a person has to dress better around here!"

And then Daisy began giggling like a ten-year-old.

"And then," said Mother, "being poor and hard run for a living is one thing among black heathen that

are all poor, but look up to you, and another among white people who are rich and look down on you."

Daisy quit her giggling at that and looked sober.

"Aunt Lucy," said she, "that's a profound truth; but Frank says that we have just got to go against this game."

"It wasn't Frank, was it," said I, "that said 'For he that is least among you all the same shall be great'?"

"Oh, well," said the Reverend Frank, wriggling in his seat as if on nettles, "this is a business proposition, and I believe we can make a go of it!"

I sort of begun to like him then.

We found out by degrees, partly then and partly since, that Frank had worked his way through a divinity school by serving as athletic director; and went to the university to take a course in psychology so he could preach better. There he dropped one day into a conference on the condition of the rural church, and as a consequence flopped over to the agricultural college and specialized in rural economics. Daisy Raymond was writing a thesis on Rural Sanitation after taking a course in nursing, and they met. After that he majored in Daisiness and she in Frankism, and both became enthusiastic over the idea that it was their duty to do what they could to serve the people of the United States of America, and especially the country people. That talk of mine with the Reverend Henry Ackerman, who was born on the next farm and is now a city preacher, had mighty little to do with their decision. But I think it might have had some connection with

their coming to the Fairview neighborhood, Old Mule Raymond's alighting-place when he flew across the Mississippi in the fifties.

The church situation in our neighborhood was typically bad. There weren't as good church facilities as fifty years ago. Then we had no church buildings, but pioneer ministers used to hold services in the schoolhouses frequently, and there was a Sunday-school every few miles. As the country got richer, the families of the pioneer farmers kept moving to town, and the town preachers, like the city doctors, had all they could do to attend to their city practise. They didn't care for us any more. They could serve the Lord by wholesale in towns, but farmers were a retail proposition; and who can blame a man for laboring in the wholesale vineyard rather than in the five- and ten-cent line? Only the youngsters cared to ride the country roads, and they weren't crazy about it. The churches kept up a pretense of holding services in the schoolhouses, but the congregations fell off. The folks and the preachers had no chance to get acquainted. The pioneer ministers of years agone were more like us. The towns of sixty years ago weren't so much different from the farms as they are now. The age of specialization had not set in. There was the pioneer spirit of getting acquainted which pervaded everything. Why, when I was a boy we never passed a team on the road without stopping and having a talk, and especially if the people in the outfit were strangers. If an outfit of strangers stopped at the house to inquire the way to

the next town we asked them in to dinner, and were pretty likely to tell them that it was too late to make it that day and they'd better stop and stay all night. If they stayed, we made up shakedowns on the floor and slept with a family of strangers in the same room with not half the impropriety a man sees in a sleeping car to-day. Why, strangers were better acquainted then than most neighbors are now. In that sort of atmosphere, and the old-fashioned attitude of veneration toward the clergy there was no such divisive strife between town and country church affairs as exists now. So I am perfectly safe in saying that when Frank Wiggins and Daisy came to us—and it's just the same to-day in most rural neighborhoods—the preacher who really devotes himself to a rural pastorate in the dead-and-done-for church surroundings of the twentieth century is more of a pioneer than were the ministers of the prairie settlements of the middle of the nineteenth.

There was an old brick church on the corner of my farm which had not been used except by sparrows and wasps for twenty years. It had been built by a congregation of Winebrennerians from Pennsylvania before the war, and closed by a lawsuit and general fracas in the time of Elder Hershberger about 1870. The old Pennsylvania Dutch settlers died off and their children went to town or to Dakota or Western Canada. The land had reverted to me under a clause in the deed under which I gave it to them. The roof was bad, and the floors ruinous, and the windows all out;

but except where the bricks had fallen out under some of the windows and over the doors, the walls were in pretty fair shape. If it hadn't been so far from the farm buildings I should have converted it into a cow stable or something of the sort, but it was at the other end of the place. It typified in brick and moldering wood the decline of the rural church in thousands and thousands of farm communities.

"I want you to give me the old Winebrennerian church," said Mr. Wiggins.

"Well, if that's all," I began.

"It isn't all," said he. "How many acres are there in that marsh back of the church?"

"About fifteen acres," said I. "You don't want that, do you?"

"Yes," he answered, "I want that, too."

The marsh was of small use to me, because I couldn't drain it. To do so I had to discharge the water on the land across the road, and I never had been able to get consent from Abel Bohn, the son of one of the original Winebrennerians. He was sore at me because I didn't let him have the church, as the last member of the congregation—a sort of cook, and captain bold and mate of the Nancy brig. Abel and I were not very friendly—all on account of the marsh. It bred mosquitoes, and it was only in dry seasons that it could be mowed—and then the hay wasn't very good. But he wouldn't let me discharge the water on him.

"Got any money?" I asked, looking at Mr. Wiggins.

The Reverend Frank looked at Daisy inquiringly.

"Three hundred and eighty-seven dollars," said she, "and sixty-seven cents. But we've oceans and oceans of clothes, and we can live a long time on that. If we wait for money enough, Uncle Abner, it will show that we haven't enough faith to make a success of the work anyhow—and nobody will ever endow us."

"Two young fools!" said I—but I finally told them they could have the ruins and the swamp.

What they expected to do with this equipment was a mystery to me; and the wonder extended to the whole neighborhood when early in April the Reverend Frank Wiggins and his Daisy wife appeared one day when the woolly anemones were peeping up through the dry grass at the roadsides, and the marsh pools were gilded with cowslips, and took possession of their church and its aqueous glebeland.

"For the land's sake!" exclaimed Mrs. Hans Larsen, wife of the Dane who was John Ackerman's tenant that year, "yust look what the preacher's doin' in the old churchyard!"

I stepped out back through the grove and looked. There was a nice wall tent pitched under a tree on the south side of the old church, with a fly stretched by its ropes to trees. The few neglected graves were within a stone's-throw. Passing back and forth from a dray to the tent were Daisy and the Reverend Frank carrying cooking utensils, hammocks, books, cameras and typewriters. A banjo and a fiddle hung on the side of the tent—I could see them plainly etched against the white canvas. A camp-fire was already sending up

its azure smoke into the chill blue April sky. The Wigginses had moved in!

"'Foxes have holes,' Uncle Abner," said Daisy, "'and the birds of the air have nests, but the son of man hath not where to lay his head.' Why should we worry when we have such a bully place as this tent?"

"Ish ka bibble," said the Reverend Frank.

"Well," said I, "about the time the mosquitoes begin to come out of the marsh, you'll begin to bibble."

"Oh, I'm going to drain the swamp," said he.

"I think I see you!" said I, having in my mind's eye the sour visage of Abel Bohn whenever I alluded to drainage—but, of course, Frank was not only joking, but himself a joke—as yet.

He started around the day after they got settled and visited every house for miles on his motorcycle, leaving hectographed invitations to religious services at the schoolhouse the next Sunday. My wife and I went. Everybody went. That camp they had established in the old churchyard was the best advertisement they could have had. We wondered what sort of religion he would preach anyhow. The Wigginses were so odd in their methods that we thought maybe it would be a sort of Salvation Army or Holy Jumper affair. But there wasn't a thing out of the ordinary, except that Daisy led the singing with her fiddle, and the Reverend Frank dominated the soprano with a round baritone. Daisy played a violin solo which we all liked, but any one could see that she never would be able to set the world afire as a violinist.

When the services were over Daisy crept into the hearts of all the old settlers' wives by talking old times in Fairview; and captured the rest in other strategic ways. Frank had a word with every person there who didn't hurry away to keep from being solicited to support the new preacher—and there were not a few of those. Daisy and Frank went home with us to dinner, and several neighbors went along. We simply had fun that day, with Daisy and Frank leading the merriment —you know the kind of time we sometimes have when people get so full of laugh they can't stop, and anything at all is funny. I'm sorry these affairs get fewer and fewer as we grow older. Why need it be so?

Frank and Daisy went back to what they called their pavilion pretty soon after dinner, and left us to discuss the sermon.

"Not what you'd call an eloquent man."

"Good, clear, common-sense talk, though."

"I should say he'd never make 'em hit the sawdust trail in droves."

"Got a peach of a wife, hain't he, now?"

"She gets good expression out of the violin, but as for power—she ain't there."

"Well," summed up my wife, "it was as good a gospel sermon as I ever heard! But what was left out of that service? It seemed all right—but what was lacking?"

We sat in offish thought a while, and then I slapped my thigh and shouted, "Gosh 'lmighty! He never took up the collection!"

in themselves unwritten romance. I shall never see its like again. Nobody will ever see its like again. I have seen it when the far-off shoulders of its low hills were blue with violets, or when its anemones were pushing their woolly heads up through the gray grasses under grayer skies; seen it as an ocean whose swells were hills and whose ripples were the shadows on crinkling grasses spreading away as far as the eye could see, unmarred by homestead or stack; I have lived with the wild fowl now gone, the wolves, the gophers, the badgers, and the smooth, harmless snakes; seen the clouds flying over this wonderful prairie, each followed over the knolls by its double in shadow; watched the tornado go ravening over it seeking prey where none was found; breasted the blizzards; heard the triumphant chorus of all the prairie brooks as they rippled out of the patchy snows in the spring sunlight down to the swales, and off with the roaring creeks to the river—and then I have seen the black burnt sod shimmer into the delicate green of April, to pass through every shade of pink, yellow, gold, gray and brown, until the tumble-weeds chased one another from hillock to hollow in the autumn like stampeded brown sheep. I would give anything to see it again; but I never can, for the world does not hold its like.

I have seen all this green sod broken by the plow; and where I saw a desert, I now see a teeming empire of men and women, the best, I am persuaded, in America. All in my life. Perhaps there is no romance in that, but there is something mighty. I have read a

book called "A Foreign Tour at Home," by an elderly New Englander, who not many years ago for the first time went across the continent to California, and could see nothing but what seemed to him rather squalid and dismal in the Corn Belt. He didn't like our endless succession of farms, each with a house of no particular style of architecture, and tower-like silos, and big red barns. The roads were not good, they were all distinctly straight, and ran north and south or east and west. The whole country seemed unkempt, to him—not realizing how much there is of it to be kempt and how few people there are per square mile to kemb it. To him there was no romance or beauty in the groves we planted in the prairie and which now stand tall and green about the farmsteads, nor in the long rows of waving corn, or the sleek herds of cows and the feed-yards peopled with fat steers dividing their time between alfalfa in the racks and corn in the troughs, with an occasional nibble at the lush blue-grass in the pastures. Well, maybe there isn't any beauty in it, but it looks good to us. I honestly believe that this New Englander, who is a literary man, was repelled from the Corn Belt's beauties because of the straight lines, the absence of great areas wasted in the grounds of gentlemen—in short, because it didn't look like England. We get most of our literary farming from British writers.

And in that opinion Mr. O. Geoffrey Sharpe would have agreed with him when he arrived at the Pup Farm. He was twenty-five or so, and had been shipped

over from that same England by a family who couldn't for their lives find a place for him there. If we are to understand young Sharpe, we must know what the Pup Farm was—and, in my opinion, a real writer could make more of a story of that than of Jeff's career. If Dickens of his Dotheboys Hall and its Mr. Squeers made immortal literature, I should think a writer who knew his business could do as well with Major Ridgeway and his Pup Farm—even if it was in the Corn Belt.

Major Ridgeway was an Englishman who came in about the time of the German invasion in the Mid-West, bought a goodish tract of land in the western part of the Wheeler's Crossroads District, and went into farming. He built a house on the plan, I am told, of an English country home, though probably not so fine; but it was a good deal too much house for the farm. It made the overhead too big for profits. The major was a pompous, red-whiskered, toppy chap who came over the sea expecting to found an estate, a family line, and all the rest of it on the European plan. A considerable number of men did the same thing in the sixties. I can recall now the cases of Doctor Knopf, a German professor; Conrad Schwagermann, a German landowner, who sold out and came; Thomas O'Hara, an Irish squire; and a Frenchman named Fournier who came from France to Quebec and then to this country. They all failed, because land was plenty, and Americans would not work for these gentry for less than they could earn working for them-

selves; and if the gentry paid the scale, they could, as a matter of course make no profits; since when a man gets all he makes there is nothing left for his employer. In the same wave of immigration there came thousands of poverty-stricken peasants who succeeded, where the men with capital and aristocratic notions almost always failed. The reason is perfectly obvious. The only way to succeed was to produce, and the only way to produce was to work; gentlemen could not work, while peasants could and would. Major Ridgeway occupied himself for several years in finding out that for some reason he was gradually sliding downhill into bankruptcy by the operation of a farm of the richest land on earth; and in looking out for a remedy he hit upon the idea of establishing a school in which young Britons might learn American agriculture, and thus avoid the failure which it was beginning to be suspected was likely to overtake the non-working landowner on the cheap lands of the United States.

This school was the Pup Farm. Of course that was not its correct name, but we never thought of calling it by any other. I happen to know how the name originated, because I remember when the old major established kennels of various kinds of dogs and tried to sell their progeny. Naturally a simple people who called a farm from which pigs were sold a hog farm called Major Ridgeway's estate a Pup Farm; but after he had restocked it with scions of British gentility the name stuck, and, I believe, had something to do with the more or less well-founded popular notion that

these young men each represented a skeleton in the closet of a rich and possibly titled British family. So, you see we despised Ridgeway's Pups; and they certainly looked down on us, whether they did us the honor of concerning themselves so far as to despise us or not. And Jeff Sharpe was one of Ridgeway's Pups.

Alice Bailey, a niece of mine, was a country schoolteacher in those days, and was keeping the Wheeler Crossroads School. The Ridgeway farm and a school section were in that district, and neither of these were the homes of children: so her school was small—only half a dozen pupils, and often none at all. In going to and from school she followed a road which ran over the prairie in those curves which our esthetic eastern critics so much miss; but Ridgeway had begun to break the prairie, and was trying to make the teams on the road follow the section line. You know, however, that it takes two or three years to subdue the soil of an old prairie trail, and Alice still followed the hard path through the Pup Farm fields in spite of the panels of fence which shut off the teams.

One day as she topped a knoll, she saw one of Major Ridgeway's farm teams in difficulties. The horses were hitched to an old-fashioned square harrow with forty sharp steel teeth, twenty in each section. The driver had attempted to turn the harrow too short, and it had begun to double up. The outer section of the harrow rose in the air and drove the teeth of the other section down into the earth. This lifted the doubletree at one end, and tended to pull the traces under the feet

of the inside horse and over the back of the outer. The horses had begun to prance—for the major liked spirited horses, even for farm work—and Alice, who had been reared on a farm, knew that if they were not turned back so as to let the harrow straighten out, it would be upset, tangle the team up in the gear, and, possibly, if he hung to the lines, throw the driver on the sharp teeth, now sticking out instead of down; or if he let them go, the runaway horses would almost certainly jerk the harrow upon themselves and be torn as by bayonets. The driver seemed utterly incompetent to straighten out the tangle, which was fast becoming really dangerous; so Alice ran to the horses' bits, turned them sharply to the right and eased them forward. The harrow straightened, the right-hand section coming down with a sharp chop, and when Alice had quieted the horses and looked back, she saw the driver lifting the harrow to release his foot. Instead of keeping out of the way, as any farmer would have done he had stood helplessly gazing at the girl who was so skilfully getting him out of his scrape—and had got a steel spike three-quarters of an inch thick right through the flat part of his foot.

"Thank you very much," said he, lifting his hat. "Very stupid of me to do that. I'm a beastly duffer, you know, at this work!"

"You're hurt!" she exclaimed, looking at the blood gushing up out of his boot. "Oh, you're awfully hurt!"

"Oh, not at all I assure you," he replied—and keeled

over in the dirt. A spike through the foot will put a man out as soon as anything I know of.

Alice tied the team to a wagon standing near, dragged the fool Englishman to a clean, hard spot in the old road, with a tussock of grass for a pillow, ran back to the schoolhouse for water and some remedies she kept there in case any of the children should get hurt, ran back, doused his face with the water and brought him to; and then, against his weak protests, took off his boot and sock, cleansed the wound of dirt with water and spirits of camphor, wrapped it up with torn linen which she evolved from the surrounding circumstances, flooded it with tincture of arnica, put on an outer covering made of a grain bag which she found in the wagon, helped him to the spring seat, threw into the wagon his boot and sock, drove him to the Lodge, as they called the Pup Farm, and delivered him to Major Ridgeway's man Pulver; who notified the major, I suppose, that young Sharpe, who had just come in, had already rendered the major liable on his contract to give his pupils medical attention as a part of the quid pro quo for the seventy-five pounds a year each which he charged for their board and tuition.

This was "Becky's" introduction to the Pup Farm's curriculum. Major Ridgeway's course of study consisted of family prayers every morning, to keep his contract for religious and moral surroundings; and for the rest of the day the boys were supposed to absorb agriculture from the plow-handle, the lines of the

farm harness, curry-combs, the teats of cows, and other practical farm contacts. It was exactly like Mr. Squeers' plan of making his boys work in the grounds and garden; with no pretense, however, on the part of Major Ridgeway in the direction of book or laboratory study.

We farmers envied the major at first his shrewdness in actually obtaining nearly four hundred dollars cash, apiece, annually, for keeping his hands, while the rest had not only to keep them but also to pay them for their work. It looked to us as if he had the southern slaveholders beaten in the labor market by exactly seventy-five pounds a year per head. But we did not understand the Pups. Britons never can be slaves—and these chaps were typical Britons. They averaged pretty high in wildness. They certainly gave the county seat a rich carmine tint; for while all of them were supposed to be in exile, some for their sins, and others because their families could not afford to give them a financial start in England, they all had more money than any of us possessed. Their remittances were struggled for by the saloons, and gambled for by our local tinhorns. The Farmers' Saloon changed its name to the House of Lords, and Jimmie Preston, once a British soldier, was made its manager by the German brewers who owned it. On the other side of the street Julius Hoffman, a German saloon keeper, who owned his own place, renamed it The Senate, to cater to the American trade. Our local poker-players taught the Britons their peculiar art; to which they took much more nat-

urally than to American agriculture at the Pup Farm. The major found it impossible to enforce discipline; and it took as much effort to get a day's work out of the Pups as the labor was worth. He got his yearly fees for keeping them, and he had the questionable pleasure of their company when they were at the Lodge, and that is about all.

Jeff was pretty nearly as wild as any of them. There was no studying to be done, and he sensed the graft there was for the major in his work; and what was there for him to do but join the gang? He and a young fellow named Wyatt—nicknamed "Puffin"—were the most industrious of the crowd, however. "Puffin," through a series of unexpected deaths in his family, became rich and succeeded to a title, and for a long time before his death sat in the British House of Lords, where he made only one speech. It was on the subject of "The Influence of the Settlement of the Prairie States of America on British Agriculture." It made Lord Wyatt an authority on conditions prevailing in American farming; and he had the good sense not to try speaking on anything else. He and "Becky" worked off and on, until something happened in England which cut off Jeff's remittances. He had been cleaned out at poker just after receiving his last check, and was dead broke. Major Ridgeway immediately kicked him out, and in view of the fact that the check gambled away had contained the major's "tuition" money, this was only business. At that, Jeff was no worse off than the rest of us, since he

had his health, his two hands, and a good education. It was only his bringing up that made it seem to him that he faced starvation.

He and Alice had cultivated by carefully-arranged accidents a sort of clandestine acquaintance ever since the harrow accident. She was fond of birds; and Jeff had made a collection of nests in England, and knew the names of more birds than Alice did; so they used to walk about the country, generally accompanied by one or two of the pupils of her school, looking at birds with Jeff's opera glasses, and looking them up in a book which Jeff procured. He also showed her how to make an herbarium. These accomplishments on his part seemed to her, I have no doubt, perfectly wonderful things; for she was only an ignorant frontier school-teacher whose easy examination in the common branches had been none too easy for her. Yet, notwithstanding Jeff's marvelous knowledge of the world, of birds and plants, and in spite of his nice manners; Alice knew that she should not go about with him. For he was a wicked, gambling, roistering fellow, who was supposed to be either a fugitive from justice, or the illegitimate son of some Englishman who had shipped him to get rid of him. He never spoke of his family. It was hard to induce him to speak of himself. He treated her beautifully, and to walk about with him was just like reading a book, but he was certainly not a man to whom she could stoop. Besides, he was a foreigner, and his manner of mouthing his English would make him the laughing-stock of any gathering

of the sort of people she knew; and—well, there was no use in even thinking about it. And what was "it" anyhow? There was no "it."

When Jeff was kicked off the Pup Farm Major Ridgeway sent his luggage to the station and took a check for it of the station agent. When this check was delivered to Jeff it constituted a receipt in full from the Sharpe family to Major Ridgeway for one son received in a damaged condition and abandoned in similar state. Jeff told the major he would walk to town. He wanted to think. He had no money with which to pay his fare to England or anywhere else. He had no skill in anything but shooting, tennis, polo, and various games of chance—and in the latter his skill was in no way equal to his enthusiasm. What should he do? He had been sent off by his family because he was wild and they couldn't afford the luxury of keeping him—and Major Ridgeway's correspondence did seem to show that Geoffrey might easily win a competence in America in a few years. Besides, it saved the family's face to be able to tell their friends that Geoffrey had gone rawnching in America where the millionaires are manufactured. In a country overcrowded with folks too good to work, the Sharpes are really not to be blamed, I suppose. The boy was bitter, and ashamed, and miserable, and perplexed and in despair. He wanted to walk to town and think—and he may have been aware of the fact that the road to town took him by Alice Bailey's schoolhouse.

Anyhow, it did, and when he had passed it a few

rods he stopped and sat for a while on a boulder which some old glacier had dropped there. His heart was beating rather high, and his hands were trembling. He was thirsty, too; and he knew that Alice always kept a tin pail of water on a bench in the schoolroom. Would she give him to drink? He would ask—and he walked up to the outer door, which was open, and through the entry-hall to the inner one which was closed. There was no sound within, no hum of recitation, no shuffling of feet, no piping voices pleading "Please, kin I leave my seat?" or "Please, may I speak?" There was only the droning hum coming down through the open hatch leading up into the raftered attic of the mud-wasps plying their masonry on the beams. He listened long, and as he listened he looked repeatedly at his valuable English gold watch. It was noon, and there should have been the restless racket which precedes the letting out of school—but he could hear nothing. So he gently opened the door and looked in.

It was one of those days, not so very rare, when none of Alice's pupils had come. She was alone at her cheap pine desk only four or five feet before him, facing the array of empty seats and the shabby little schoolroom. Or, she would have been facing them if she had not had her head bowed on a big book lying on the desk—a book which Jeff recognized as the herbarium. He saw that she was crying; and when she raised her head at the sound of the creaking door, her face was streaming with tears.

"I say!" he stammered. "I thought, you know—"

"Oh," she cried, "they said you'd gone back to England!"

I have no idea what took place then, save that Alice and Jeff ate Alice's lunch—and that when she had conscientiously remained at her post until three, they walked four miles over to my farm, and Alice introduced Jeff as a young friend of hers who wanted a job as a farm hand. When my wife found that he was one of the Ridgeway Pups, she wanted me to send him packing for Alice's sake; but I convinced her that we couldn't send the fellow away hungry; and that in common decency we'd have to keep him over night and take him to town the next day. She saw the justice of this, and by the time Jeff had eaten her meat and her salt, and spent half an hour in converse with her and Alice, she was for giving him a chance. She was even willing to let him take a horse and buggy and drive Alice back to her boarding place.

I don't see how it is possible for an Englishman to be poor as a permanent thing, they have so many rich aunts. This I know, that the ones domesticated among us through the Ridgeway Pup Farm—and twenty or thirty must have become permanencies—seemed always to be getting legacies from aunts. Jeff hadn't been working for me three months—not long enough to have become even a passable hand, green as he was—when he got a legacy from an aunt. It amounted to four or five thousand dollars. He finished his month's work, so as to give me a chance to get another hand, and the next thing we heard we were asked to go to the little Epis-

copal rectory in the county seat to see him married to Alice. At the wedding he told my wife and me that he had bought the farm on which Conrad Schwagermann, the German gentleman mentioned a while ago, had achieved bankruptcy. The bank had bought it in at sheriff's sale, and sold it to Jeff Sharpe. I suspect that they did this to prevent Jeff's legacy from getting across the county line.

"Why," said I, "you didn't have money enough to pay for that big farm!"

"No," said he, "I had barely enough to pay for the equipment. I owe for the whole bally farm. But I think we can make it go, don't you know!"

I told him the farm was too big for him; that he should have bought only what he could pay for; but he was amazingly cheerful, and so was Alice.

"Really, you know," said he in that style of talk that they call the "Haw-Haw Englishman" style up in Western Canada—"Really, you know, I'm quite sure I can organize other men's labor to more advantage than I can my own. I'm quite an ass at manual labor, personally, don't you know!"

Neither of them knew much farming; but they tackled the proposition with all the assurance of youth. Jeff was looked down on by the surrounding farmers because he was one of Ridgeway's Pups, even while they recognized the fact that a man who knew Latin and French and played the flute—even though he played it wretchedly—was in many ways their superior. They resented his superiority. The women assumed

the pose toward Alice that she had thrown herself away; and that certainly she couldn't expect a man of Jeff's history to be true to her. So Jeff and Alice retired from circulation. They became a sort of dual hermit. Knowing nothing of farming as a means of livelihood, and having no relations with any of his neighbors, Jeff was forced to become a book-farmer. He deliberately sat down to learn farming from the printed page.

Once in two years or so, I suppose, I used to drive in at the old Schwagermann house to see Alice, and take a look about at what was doing in Jeff's farming; and I heard strange things of him all the time. The next winter after they were married the news came to us that Alice and Jeff had moved to East St. Louis. When I heard that they had returned I went over, and learned that Jeff had been working all winter for a commission firm in the stock-yards there. When he asked them for work, they told him they didn't want him; and when he asked if he could work for them for nothing, so as to have a look at the cattle business, they said he might start in on that basis, but they could give no assurances as to the permanency of the job. On this basis he had worked, and worked hard all winter loading and unloading steers, driving them from yard to yard, running them up the great chutes to the killing rooms, and especially hanging about the selling yards to get a view of the inside of the business, and acquire the knack of telling a good steer from a poor one, either in the finished state, or as feeders and stock-

ers. Lighter in purse, but filled with enthusiasm for cattle, he came back with Alice to the Schwagermann farm, and tackled farming on a nine hundred acre scale.

Everybody laughed at his farming. We saw his blunders, which were obvious and expensive. We saw fields knobby with clods because he had plowed when it was too wet. We saw great corn-fields made hard to cultivate because of the failure of some new tool which was tried on a big scale instead of a small one. We saw stacks built to carry the rains in instead of out. We saw corn-fields half tended because he tried to do too much with the force of men he had; but we saw these and his many other bad practises corrected from year to year. One thing struck me in the beginning of his farming as probably wiser than the practise of the rest of us; he bought all the strawpiles within two miles of his place—which would in those days in the ordinary course of things have been burned to get them off the land—and hauled them to Sharpesmoor, as he called his farm. He had established relations with the cattle men in the stock-yards, so that they let him have credit for all the cattle he wanted; but most of the stock which he roughed through the winters on the wheat, oats, rye, and barley straw obtained for little or nothing, except for the hauling, he picked up in the Fairview neighborhood. His wasn't fancy stock-raising, but it was adapted to the conditions at that time. The cattle weren't toppers; but they were kept on cheap feed, and I could see, though

Bible name, like that of his father, Isaiah Bohn. Clyde is a worldly name, from Abel's point of view. Abel, the reader will, perhaps, remember, is one of the old Winebrennerians that came to the prairies before the war and built the church at the other end of my father's farm, now mine—the old brick church which Frank and Daisy Wiggins have made over into the Fairview Meeting House. At the other end of the old Bohn farm is a good piece of land, six forties, which was taken up originally by Jake Millslagle, another Pennsylvania Dutchman; and when the Millslagles moved to Oregon, a good many years ago, Abel helped Isaiah to buy it; and there Clyde was born, and given his worldly name by his mother, who was a Harris, and who knew not Winebrenner. She has always been a little different from the rest of us, and won Isaiah by the poetry she wrote under such titles as *Spring Reveries, Love's Sacrifice, Affection's Tribute,* and such things. She never got any of these verses printed, except in the Fairview items in our town paper, because, I suppose, editors print the poetry of their friends before they let any one else in, and a farmer girl in Fairview wouldn't have much chance to break into the big poetry ring; but while lots of folks think the poems of Isaiah's Harriet pretty mushy, I don't see that they are any mushier than any other poetry. They do seem to be built wrong mechanically, though, compared with regular verses like *Sheridan's Ride* and *Curfew Shall Not Ring To-night;* but they are a lot better than this new Spoon River Anthology

kind they talk so much about. So, I suppose, they're nothing to be ashamed of.

Having a mother like that, Clyde was always a little different from the other boys—that's why I mention it. It really has nothing to do with keeping the boys on the farm, excepting that ambitious boys are the hardest to keep contented—and Clyde was ambitious before he got sporty. Maybe his sportiness was just a phase of his ambition.

He was a terribly smart boy when he first went to school—our old school that we had before Tom Whelpley came to the New Consolidated. Clyde used to help the older scholars with their history and geography before he could touch his feet to the floor while sitting on those old seats. He was a leader in games, too. We never had much fighting in our neighborhood—in fact we have more now than ever before; at least I call it pretty near fighting when two boys put on gloves in our new gymnasium and slam each other around until their noses are bloody. But in view of the fact that this new sport was introduced by the Reverend Frank Wiggins, who taught boxing and other physical exercises while he was working his way through college, and that it's all good-natured and according to rules, what can we say about it? It pleases some of the boys greatly, but it looks a little rowdyish to me.

It would have pleased little Clyde Bohn, though, if we had had this gymnasium at the time of which I am writing. As it was, what fighting he did was done in

a mean sort of way as the result of boyish quarrels; and as he pretty nearly always licked the other boy, it gave him a sort of hard name, especially among the women whose sons came home with black eyes as Affection's Tribute from the son of the poet. Having a hard name is a bad thing for a boy. I can understand that the Spartan boy who let the fox eat his vitals out rather than allow it to be seen that he had stolen the animal was a hero; but if he had lived in a time and place in which stealing is just plain petty larceny, punishable by a jail sentence, he would have been merely a petty thief and no hero at all—and having no self-respect he would probably have yelled bloody murder at the first nip of the fox's teeth. Though what the Spartans did with the foxes they stole is a mystery to me.

By the time Clyde was twelve or thirteen he had about finished with our little one-room school. He could cipher right through the arithmetic, could bound Senegambia, tell the course of the Xingu River, explain the cube root with the blocks; and before dislocating his antagonist's bones, could tell him the name of every one in his body. The little high-school girls who were hired to teach this school knew a few things, I suppose, that Clyde didn't; but they could really teach him nothing. He had been filled with a sort of craze for books and learning, but when he had reached this point, and found nobody in the neighborhood to go further with him, as is the case with many of our brightest little country children, he began to get sick

of school, much to the sorrow of his mother, Harriet, who had already begun to see in him a future college president or poet laureate. But Clyde found no more pleasure in Partial Payments, Alligation Alternate and bounding the Province of Saskatchewan. Purely because of our inferior and traditional school. He was disillusioned. There was more fun in fighting; and there was a lot more fun in Johnnie Whipple, son of Eph Whipple of Indian Ridge, a boy about his own age, who never had been able to get through Common Fractions. Johnnie was full of jokes and hated books. He was a fellow of such infinite jest that a Sunday with him, in town or country, was one of continuous joy. And why go on with reading and ciphering, why tackle algebra and elementary Latin when Johnnie Whipple was so much more interesting, was alive, was ready for anything from a fight to a foot-race—and would follow Clyde through fire and water. You know how it is with these young Davids and Jonathans. It just seemed to thirteen-year-old Clyde Bohn as if the whole field of learning into which he had made such extensive explorations as to have exhausted them, so far as he could see, was a barren waste. The thing for the future was Adventure—and Adventure, which has made Funston a general, perverted Clyde into a tough boy who hated books and family worship; and would have sent him to France before his time if we had been in the war then.

Do I seem to know more about Clyde's mental proc-

esses and spiritual yearnings than could be expected of an old duffer of a farmer who never talked with the boy for five minutes? Well, I have the best of facilities for finding out all about these things. I am Marian Dunham's grandpa—and Marian, not knowing just what's the matter with her, thinks that she has a purely altruistic, and perhaps a literary or philosophical interest in the subject of Anatomy of Character. She is the little girl who made thirteen or fourteen dollars on her school garden—or have I told about that?

She confides to me that it seems as if she has a gift for seeing into the inmost souls of people. She doesn't know how she does it; but it seems to sort of come over her when she looks into a person's eyes. They tell her their secrets, aspirations, faults and fears; people do. It's wonderful! But I have never received from this pretty little analyst, in all her eighteen years of research, a report, even a progress bulletin, on the character of any human being but Clyde Bohn—or "Clydie," as she sometimes calls him. But isn't this an age of specialization? It was such as long ago as the time of Doctor Holmes, who gives us a character who dared not claim to be a biologist, or a naturalist, or even an entomologist; but having spent his life on beetles, did hope to deserve the title of Scarabeist. Sweet little Marian, standing where the brook and river meet, but possibly a little down stream from the junction, is certainly a Clydeist. Consulting her from time to time, I can go on definitely in my examina-

tion of the problem of why Clyde and John Whipple wanted to leave the farm, and why they don't want to go now, except to serve their country.

It was because there was no Adventure on the farm. It was because nobody at the boys' homes appreciated them, but, on the contrary, drove them to such loathsome tasks that the iron entered their souls. It was because it seemed so humdrum to get up in the morning at six and milk; to carry coal for the stoves; to curry sweaty horses, which would not stand like statues when their riders vaulted lightly to the ground from their backs, and did not understand the slightest pressure of the knee or the horseman's softest word as do the horses of adventurers; to be the garçon of the pigpen; never to see anything or be anybody or do anything but plow, harrow, sow, reap, mow, cultivate, and feed; to be a Reuben all your life; to meet boys who have been to Chicago and even to the ocean, and to know nothing except the Fairview neighborhood; to have fathers and mothers who wear country-looking clothes, and have rough hands, when every story you read tells about people who are so different; to meet no girls except the ones you have always known, and who don't seem to have any subtle mystery, that lissome grace, that high-bred air, that thoroughbred carriage, that ability to swim up Niagara, to rope bronchos, to sing in opera, to act in the movies, and to do everything—as the girls do in the novels of Robert Chambers—why, the very tramps bumming their way along the railway had a better life than this, for they at any

time might rescue some one from a burning house from which they had just been hounded by the honest watchdog. And how could a boy ever be a great inventor, or author, or actor, or athlete in the Fairview neighborhood? The Fairview neighborhood was so unutterably punk!

Let me tell you, good American reader, that the country boys are feeling like that by the million—and as I fill up from my own experience, the gaps in Marian's innocent narrative, which tells so much more than she imagines in it, I am strongly inclined to conclude that the greatest need for the country boy is adventure. I wonder how they will be affected by our Great Adventure in France, where, as I write this, our farmer boys are pouring out blood, and routing in fierce battle the dreaded Prussian Guards.

Marian says that Clyde never was a bad boy. Sometimes I suspect that she says this reluctantly, as if half hoping it isn't true. But he has a very Dark Past. It began with the drafting of Clyde and John in a ball game between the Elites of our county seat and the Alco club composed of the employees of the Affleck Lumber Company. Clyde played shortstop, and John Whipple second base, and they pulled off a lightning double play, besides making some other errors, and established themselves in the esteem of the Elites, a club which played for what little could be collected at the gates wherever it could get a game. Sometimes the players made as much as three dollars a game, and at other times they

walked home. However, it was the first bit of wild life these two farm boys had ever tasted and they went home expanded to the full size of their clothes. And when the next Saturday, Plug Rafferty, manager of the Elites, telephoned Clyde for him and his second-base friend to report for play at Dillsburg the next day, Clyde flagged Johnnie to come, and they went, though he well knew that one of the ways straight down to the well-known hell of his Grandfather Bohn lay through Sunday baseball. They went in an automobile filled with hard-looking baseball players, which ran ten miles out of its way for them. Thus the telephone and the motor-car, those two agencies which are supposed to make country life one grand sweet song, literally grabbed these boys away, and that almost permanently.

The newspapers carry the idea to city people that the telephone, the automobile, rural free delivery, the parcel post, and good roads have revolutionized country life, and will stop the drift of farm people to the cities. There is a chance for a good deal of error in this. In fact mighty erroneous ideas are already abroad. Many writers seem to think that it cures the isolation of rural life when we get our daily paper, our letters, and our packages delivered by the carrier right at the front gate; and can call up our neighbors over the wire and talk at will, or jump into the car and run any number of miles, almost, to see them.

They fail to see that unless our Clydes and Johnnies have something to talk about, they won't get much com-

pany out of telephone connections with the neighbors' houses. The daily papers and our other mail brought to our doors are a great convenience; but they don't build up community life much. They just put us in closer touch with the outside world. As for good roads and the automobile, it must be borne in mind that there is a mighty small mileage of good automobile roads in the country as compared with the farm frontage on public highways, and that the average farmer has as yet no car. Besides these facts, those of us who do own cars find the motoring better toward town than out into the wayback districts. That's one of the troubles with these new farm privileges. While they do bring us farmers closer together, they bring us in more intimate contact with town life as well. It's as broad as it is long—or broader. The effect upon our staying on the farm or moving to town will depend on which of the new contacts is most agreeable.

I went to look over a great machine at Madison, once, and was shown an electric crane which was a wonder. Instead of a hook or chains, it carried a great magnet which would swing all over the big room for the purpose of moving things made of iron and steel. The operator would drop this magnet on a billet of steel that twenty men couldn't have moved; and so long as the magnet was not "energized" as they called it, the billet of steel never knew the magnet was there. Then they would switch a current of electricity through the magnet, and the steel billet clung to it so fiercely that when the magnet was lifted, the billet went

with it, up into the air, over men's heads, across the room, and down to the place where they wanted it. Then they cut off the current and there was no more attraction between billet and magnet than if both had been made of putty. It made me think of the attraction of farming people to the lives they live, and toward other ways of living. If the billet had been lying on a stronger magnet, and one equally "energized," the crane magnet couldn't have moved it. It moved it because it was loose. The pull of the billet on the magnet was just as strong as the pull of the magnet on the billet, they tell me, but the magnet was hitched up to the machinery of the factory. If the billet had been attached to machinery stronger than that of the crane, it would have moved the magnet, and walked off with it. It is all a question of power and attraction. I never heard that the billet ever controlled the magnet; and when I asked the fellow running it if he had ever heard of the piece of steel dragging the magnet off to its den, he laughed. He doubtless thought this the query of a typical hick.

The city is the magnet. It is energized by all the mighty currents of modern life. The rural people, especially the boys and girls, are pieces of good hard steel and iron which feel the pull of the magnet and are carried off by it to its den because the base on which they stand has no attraction for them, or not enough. The telephone, the automobile, the parcel post, the daily paper, the city man's magazine, the macadam highway, rural free delivery, the movies reached from

ten miles in half an hour instead of half a day, schools run by city girls and by country girls who are city-minded, and anyhow, schools conducted in slavish imitation of city schools—and not well conducted even as imitations—churches either not occupied or provided with young city preachers listening all the time for city calls, the more and more numerous acquaintances made by country people in the city—all these either de-energize the farm as a magnet, or energize the big magnet and give it increased pull, while the attraction of the human billets to their jobs and to each other can be only slightly increased, unless something bigger, better, and more powerful is built up in rural life which will have more attraction for us than does the city.

The increasing value of land cuts farmers loose from their base in the soil by giving them the capital with which to move to town; and at the same time, by making the struggle of the landless farmer to buy land a pretty hopeless one, it cuts him loose from his base, too, by destroying his optimism. At least that's the way it looks to me from my view-point as the official mossback of the Fairview neighborhood.

It was an open secret that Clyde Bohn was on the point of breaking with his father and grandfather when our new era began with the arrival of Frank and Daisy Wiggins. Clyde was asking his father for his "time." Isaiah was in despair. He had reached the stage at which he was ready to do anything to keep his boy with him, but he didn't know what to do. We are an old-fashioned people, and a patriarchial, in

some respects; and a father is his son's boss. When Clyde wanted his "time" it meant that he wished to cut this family bond, go out into the world and work for himself, buy his own clothes, board himself, and be industrially a stranger to the Bohn farm. This seemed to Isaiah a good deal like burying him, and he refused; but he was not able to refuse in such a way as to avoid making the breach wider.

"You're a minor," said he to Clyde, "and I'm entitled to your wages wherever you work And I'll collect them, too! Now you go out and plow corn, and drop this. When you're twenty-one I don't expect you to think of your mother and me any more—but till then, you'll keep on just as you are. Do you hear me!"

"Then," said Clyde, "I'm nothing more than a slave!"

"You're no more a slave than I was at your age," cried Isaiah. "Slave! The idea! As good a home as you've got! Don't let me hear any more of this, young man!"

"You let me have my way," demanded Clyde. "You let me have my way, or I'll have it anyway!" And he went to the corn-field; for the habit of obedience sometimes persists after obedience itself has ceased.

Now Isaiah had come to feel that if Clyde would only do things which were not wicked, he might amuse himself as he pleased and not do a lick of work, if he would only just stay at home and be good; but he was afraid to let Clyde go, for fear he would go to Sunday

baseball, pool playing, picnics with the town girls, and maybe poker playing and drinking. He was afraid to let him go; but the way he took of refusing convinced Clyde that all the old man wanted of him was what work he could do. His whole short life convinced him of this sordid selfishness on his father's part. He had had given to him calves, colts, pigs, and lambs; but when they grew up they were always his father's. He had no money, and no regular way of getting any. Why didn't his father pay him something for his work, and let him buy his own things? He asked himself this, and could find no answer, except his father's greed. He never admitted to himself that his father couldn't separate Clyde, his little boy, from himself, the farm, and that future when Clyde would have it all.

The money that Plug Rafferty had paid him for playing baseball was a wonderful thing to him. He had walked home with John Whipple after the first game, and in many a hollow they had stopped and tossed back and forth those three silver dollars each which Plug had given them. It was wonderful. They had actually earned that money—and still more wonderful, they had earned it by doing something which was play for them, not work.

The older I get the more firmly I am convinced that this national efficiency of which we hear so much talk, is to be achieved, not by such tricks as doing things with the fewest possible motions, but by developing our industrial system to the point where everybody will work as Clyde and Johnnie played ball, for the joy of it and

not for the wage. Then it won't make so much difference about the false motions we make.

And the best that Isaiah had been able to do was to make Clyde believe that he was a slave! Not that Isaiah was peculiar in this. Clyde wasn't the only farm boy who felt the same way. Millions of the lads take a good deal the same view of their lives—that's what ails us. I guess my boys felt at times a good deal as Clyde did, but none of them had what Harriet Bohn, Clyde's mother, calls the lyric temperament—which, as I understand it, is the temperament which enables a boy of sixteen or eighteen to see in three silver dollars a symbol of freedom and joy and pleasure and wealth achieved in perfectly corking ways similar to those employed by Frank Merriwell. Any boy who doesn't know the gentleman to whom I refer I wish to congratulate—and pity.

Well, here was Clyde's Crisis. According to my fair informant, the young hero, oppressed, misunderstood and worrying just terribly, spent many sleepless nights over it. Remembering my own youth I am convinced that if he did it was in executive session with Johnnie Whipple. To all intents and purposes the boys had already run away—all they awaited was the maturity of plans.

I shall fail—I am convinced of that—to make any of my readers understand what it still means in such communities as ours for a boy, the son of God-fearing parents and the scion of the family of an old settler, to run away. I sometimes read stories of boys disappear-

ing from, and then casually returning to their city homes, as if the thing were only a trifle, instead of a tragedy, as it is with us. I suspect that our city boys have really lost the ancient conception of the act of "running away." We inherit our terror of it, I think, from the old days, not very long ago in time, but ages and ages in change, when the boy who ran away from the farm went to sea, or to the forest. His mother lay through the sleepless nights shuddering at the thought of reeling masts dipping their yards in climbing surges as the ship dropped between the swells, with a speck clinging to the yard—which was her boy; or the cry of the owl in the grove caused to flash on the screen of her imagination the prowling Indian or the howling wolf. That was running away when I was a boy, and still more so in my father's time down in Maine. And even now, the farm boy does not "leave home," but "runs away." The expression carries the notion of a slave, or at least an indentured servant, breaking his bonds and losing his master all the money invested in him, with this difference—the breach is wider when the son goes, because in going he also breaks the Commandments.

There is an unspoken feeling on the part of the runaway son, especially if he has the lyric temperament—which, I notice, manifests itself in Fairview in the licking of other boys and playing a good game at shortstop—that even if he runs away as a bluff, he becomes a recreant and a nincompoop, unless he makes his bluff good. The runaway must not return. That

is giving in, and crawling back, and failing in the essence of the test. He may, and usually does, look forward to the time, not so many years off, when he will sweep up to the door which he is never supposed to darken again, and alighting from his huge car with red wheels, he convinces his parents of his identity—with some difficulty, their eyes being dazzled by the sparkle of the diamonds—and then leads from the car a beautiful lady in rustling silks, saying magnanimously, "Father and mother, all is forgiven! Meet my wife." Unless he can do something like this, he must not come back. He must show them. After years have passed, and the cars and diamonds and silks and velvets fail to materialize, he may properly return, because he is now old himself, and sees things differently. But usually he doesn't return. It is a long way from the end of the rainbow to the farm, and the old ties weaken, and the new ties strengthen—or maybe they just stretch out ahead between the rails, and you blunder on using them to walk upon whenever it isn't possible to get the brakeman to overlook your presence in some empty going back to the mines.

Clyde and Johnnie were just ready to make the break when something happened which, I believe, will put such things out of the minds of the boys of the Fairview neighborhood forever.

They were to leave home on Saturday. Clyde was promised by Plug Rafferty a job in a livery stable so long as he played for the Elites, and it was agreed to protect his wages against any suit his father might

bring by slipping him a piece of money after every game, and arranging that the livery stable management should pay Plug ten dollars a month for Clyde's account, and give the boy a place to sleep among the horse-blankets and lap-robes back of the office from which smelly lair he was to emerge when called by the bell for night duty. Johnnie was given a situation in Rafferty's pool-hall as a—I was about to say "billiard-marker," but it would have been a concession to British literature if I had. Every castoff worthless son of a gentleman in the British books which I have read ekes out—the words "ekes out" always appear—ekes out, I repeat, "a precarious existence as a billiard-marker." I do not know, however, what a billiard-marker is. If there is one in the world, I am sure he is not in the Mississippi Valley. Johnnie, however, was to rack up the balls, keep the tables clean, and play pool for the house when business was slack, getting his board and bed from Plug, and his money from baseball—which comes about as near to the duties of a billiard-marker as is possible in the Corn Belt. Need I dwell on the gulf which opened before the feet of these two young rustics? No.

The Reverend Frank Wiggins had just pitched his tent in the churchyard of the old Winebrennerian temple, and was beginning his career as a truly rural preacher, Daisy was rejoicing in the prospect of living in a tent as a present-day pioneer in the missionary field of the Corn-Belt rural church. Frank had already thimble-rigged me out of the fifteen acres of marsh,

and had wheedled Clyde's grandfather into letting him drain it by pumping the water across the road on Abel's land. He was fishing for men and boys, now, and being a crack pitcher, was taking a census of the baseball material in the neighborhood. Bill Ames was his first victim; and from Bill he had obtained the names of all the fellows in the neighborhood who constituted baseball material, actual or potential.

"Clyde Bohn," said Bill, "is a corker at third. He can play short, too. I can dub around pretty well at short, but I can't play third for sour apples."

The next morning, which was Friday, Frank was scurrying about on his motorcycle with his hand-bills announcing the services the next Sunday, when he met Clyde.

"Say," said he, "you're just the chap I wanted to see."

"What for?" asked Clyde gruffly, for he felt no interest in Frank or his church project—in fact he regarded his own interest in Fairview and Fairview affairs of all sorts definitely at an end forever—or at least until that time when he could return in the high-powered car, and the rest of it.

"Baseball," said Frank. "We're going to play on the Dunham lot to-morrow morning."

"Who?" inquired Clyde, who would have spent his last breath turning over to see even one play in a game of baseball.

Frank hurried over such of his list as he could remember, and hinted at an organized team.

"Do you play?" asked Clyde.

"I pitch," replied Frank. "I was a pretty good pitcher in college."

"Did you make the team?" asked Clyde.

"Two seasons," said Frank; "but I must be all out of form now. I hear you're a third baseman."

"Shortstop," stated Clyde. "Bill Ames told you I'm a third baseman. He always wants to play short himself."

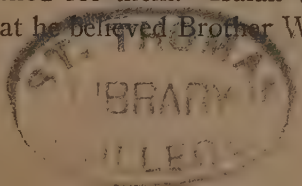
"How is he?" asked Frank.

"Well," said Clyde, "of course we ain't any of us in the varsity class, but Bill is good. Plug Rafferty says Bill fields at short better than I do. We hit about alike, but I've got a better whip."

"Then you're better at third than he," suggested Frank.

"Maybe," admitted Clyde.

Before they got through with this fanning bee, Clyde had agreed to report for practise the next day, and bring Johnnie Whipple with him. The idea of a Fairview team rather appealed to him, but as something with which as one who was passing out of the Fairview life he had no personal interest—but he would come out just the same. Before the game was over, he had accepted the position of third baseman of the team, with Bill Ames at short and Johnnie Whipple at second. He seconded Bill Ames's motion that they cut out Sunday games and all go to church as long as the pitcher preached for them. Isaiah was moved to say to his son that he believed Brother Wiggins was going



to do a great work among them, and that Clyde was at liberty to take as many afternoons off to practise as seemed necessary.

"I guess we can afford to do as much for the neighborhood," said Isaiah, "as any of the neighbors."

This, from Isaiah, was the moral equivalent of an embrace, a blessing and a new covenant of love on the part of almost any other man. The Bohns are undemonstrative. They are firm, too; and the Reverend Mr. Wiggins, who had counted on baseball and the meetings in the schoolhouse and afterward in the church to cure Clyde of his dislike for the country, even though he had no definite worthy purposes with reference to the city, was gradually forced to the conclusion that the boy's ailment was too deep-seated for that. The Bohn ice was too thick over things at home—an ice of manners and customs, which kept Isaiah from talking with the boy about their bettered relations—Clyde wouldn't have been able to discuss that himself, for that matter—or to change conditions of life much for him. He just assumed that Clyde had had a boyish tantrum or so and had seen the error of them, still putting Clyde in the wrong. Therefore he made a special effort to be considerate of the boy, for about a week, and then, under the drive of the season things became a good deal as they had been before, except that Clyde and Plug Rafferty had drifted apart, and that both he and Johnnie were really proud of the Fairview baseball team, which, built around the minister as pitcher, Bill at short, Johnnie at second, and Clyde third, was a

good deal better team than we shall have again for a long time, now that both Clyde and Johnnie have quit. Clyde was captain, too, and that held him. In short, the baseball team gave all the boys some pleasure, and some responsibility. Pleasures and responsibilities are great anchors. If Isaiah had known how to give his son his welcome into real life as his father's partner, with the attendant responsibilities and pleasures, Clyde's cure would have been complete.

But Isaiah didn't know how. I believe that's the main trouble with the farm boys—their parents don't know how to treat them as they must be treated if the farm is to compete successfully with the city for their allegiance. Our homes are traditional, our schools are traditional, our churches are traditional; but our environment is not traditional. The railroad track at the back of the farm, the macadam road to the city, the telephone, the papers and magazines, the endless succession of motor-cars along the highway, electricity, the airship, the motor-boat, the air full of wonderful things, wars, sieges, strange devices, new thoughts—these are in our environment. Our family lives are not yet adjusted to it. I don't know how we can individually adapt ourselves, and I think I'm smarter than Isaiah Bohn; but because I didn't know, I have two sons in Chicago that would be better off if they had stayed here. So I have no right to blame Isaiah for a failure which is so very common among us—a failure which we farmers do not know how to avoid. I know some of us do—but on the whole, we don't know how

to avoid turning our boys against farm life any more than we can give ourselves a proper system of short-time credits to supplement the Federal Farm Loan system or the cooperative agencies which we very well know we need for marketing our products, or many other good things.

Something more powerful than the individual farmer must act to reconcile the boys and girls to the farm. The church? Well, our church—if it really is one—is the most active and socially powerful one of which I have any knowledge, so far as the open country is concerned—and Frank Wiggins failed on Clyde Bohn. All he could do was to hold him until the more powerful thing could come along and give Clyde something worth looking up to in the way of rural occupation—and curiously enough, Frank held him with baseball more than with Sunday-school or sermons.

Then the more powerful thing came along—the new kind of rural school. It is more powerful because it has back of it the nation's might exerted through taxation; and because no church can take everybody in, while the school can and does. It came in the person of Tom Whelpley, Fairview's New Hired Man, the principal of our consolidated rural school. Tom arrived on the scene just at the time when Clyde's Second Crisis was on. Allen Whipple, Johnnie's older brother, had come home from Butte where he worked in a copper mine, and both Johnnie and Clyde had become fired with the ambition to go to the mines—not with Allen, who would not have thought of such a thing as

enticing the boys away, but to the mines considered in a sort of broad general way. What they really wanted was Adventure, and money of their own. Give the boys those two things on the farm, and they'll stay. I may have told you—if I haven't I will—how the Reverend Frank tried to impose on us as county demonstrator this Tom Whelpley, a Tennessee hill-billy with an agricultural education, and a great talent for country living. We kicked, and had to take him as principal of our new consolidated rural school.

The new lever for moving things—a ruralized rural school—broke up the plans of Clyde and Johnnie, by winning Johnnie. He had a natural bent for mechanics, and when that drunken German traitor to the Kaiser, Adolph Tulp—he has never tasted liquor since—was enlisted by Tom Whelpley to teach the boys of the school how to tie all the knots he had picked up as a sailor, how to handle tools, and especially how to do blacksmith work, he won Johnnie back to the school and away from the mines. John Whipple actually began to search for broken things to mend on the Whipple farm, especially things made of iron. He had been out of school for two years, and refused to attend because there was nothing going on there which interested him. Now he became Adolph's right-hand man in the shop, presiding over the forge. He is the boy who made the ornamental lantern, which Adolph says is the forerunner of an art in our iron-working which will rebuild in America the wrought-iron art of old Nuremberg.

Whipple, his father, was on the school board, and that lantern, which was made before we hired Tom, and while he was living with the Wigginses, not only cooked the goose of Clyde in his scheme to toll Johnnie off to the mines, but landed Tom Whelpley the job as principal. Eph Whipple said that Tom was "practical," because he not only taught the boys how to set tires, sharpen plows, make clevises and the like, but got lessons in geography, history, language, drawing, and I don't know what else out of the job—and made the boys work and like it.

Does this seem to you like a small thing? It is the biggest thing that ever came to us. When that long Tennessean began his work among us, and before he began his school work in a regular way, he made a record of the ambitions in life of every child in the neighborhood between the ages of ten and twenty. The girls were all against farm life, except a very few; and of the boys, four out of every five agreed with the girls. Last week a similar straw vote among the same children showed four out of every five of the girls, and all but two of the boys strong for staying on the farm till death—and among these was Clyde Bohn, now just turning twenty. The ruralized rural school will stop the drift to the cities.

How Tom got Clyde is of small consequence compared with the big fact that he did get him—saved him to country life, and kept country life from being impoverished by his loss; and yet, to me, it is worth noting as an instance of the sort of work the new kind of

rural teacher must do if we are to have the new kind of rural life—a life which can give cards and spades to the sort of existence most of us farmers have to live when we move to town, and beat it. Tom is a persistent fellow—he had to be to work his way through one college, and when he made his decision that he was country-minded, and could not succeed in city schools, to proceed to work his way through another, taking so many years for it that he came to us at the beginning of his real career with gray in his hair. He tried everything as a bait for Clyde—and everything failed for two years. He tried him on corn and pig club work, but Clyde wasn't interested. He tried him on cow testing and was defeated by the skepticism of Isaiah. He tried him on corn-root aphis control; but Clyde became disgusted when his father insisted that it was the ants that injured the corn, and that Tom's story that all the ants were doing was to take care of the aphis which they use as people use cows, was too thin for a practical farmer to believe. And then my little granddaughter, Marian, who has always insisted that Clydie is a good, but much-misunderstood boy, told Tom how smart Clyde used to be in figures—and Tom's face lit up like that of a detective when he strikes the unmistakable clew.

That night he went to see Clyde. He took with him a mass of figures relating to the costs of farming in Fairview, the expenses, the values of land, the seasonal crises in work, the prices of the various crops, the balancing of rations for live stock, the cheapening of

maintenance rations for taking stock through the winter, the comparative profitableness of various farms.

"I need help," said he to Clyde.

"What kind of help?" asked Clyde.

"I'm not very good in figures," admitted Tom, "and these figures stump me—some of them."

Some of them stump the professors of agricultural economics, and Tom knew it; but he was putting on his celebrated sketch showing a person in the act of being wise as a serpent and harmless as a dove.

"Here it says," said Clyde, looking over the data, "that it costs Jim Milligan so much an acre for labor for every acre of corn. Where did those figures come from?"

"Young Barney Milligan brought them in," answered Tom. "And that's another trouble. I am not quite sure that all these figures are accurate. A boy or girl has to have a sense of quantity in order to get these facts right—and Barney is better in almost anything else than in figures."

"Why do you call tobacco on the Myers place," asked Clyde, still delving into the figures, "as profitable as barley, when the figures show that the barley brings in a third more for every hour of labor than the tobacco?"

"Well," said Tom, "that's another thing I'm not sure of. You see we loaded the figures for varying conditions."

"Loaded figures!" exclaimed Clyde—for please remember, he was no Zerah Colburn in mathematics, but

just a good bright arithmetic pupil—"I never heard of loaded figures."

"Well, you see," replied Tom, "barley competed with corn plowing and the hay harvest. A lot of the work on tobacco is done in the winter when time isn't so valuable. It is the same with work done on live stock. These problems are hard—but it wouldn't be right, would it, to call time put in on live stock or tobacco equal hour for hour to the time put in on barley?"

"No," said Clyde, "I don't suppose it would."

"Would you mind helping me on these things?" asked Tom.

"I'd like to," replied Clyde. "I never thought there is much to farm figures—but there is, ain't there?"

"The most difficult accounting I know anything about," replied Tom. "We have no really satisfactory system of farm bookkeeping or farm economics. If we work out the thing in this school, we have a chance to find out more about it than they know down at the agricultural college, and they'll be glad to have our figures."

"Well," said Clyde, "I think the best thing I can do is to spend a few evenings on my wheel checking up these figures right on the farms. Barney isn't the only one that can get them wrong. As fast as I get 'em down to cases, I can come to the schoolhouse, and we'll put them in shape. You know a lot more about it than I do, but I believe I do know when a thing is true."

In a week, Isaiah asked Clyde gruffly when he was

going to get through monkeying around with Tom Whelpley, and Clyde told him that he would enter school again, if his father didn't care. Isaiah, tickled to death, said he didn't care. Clyde informed him that in working out some figures for Tom Whelpley, he had discovered that in order to understand them he had to do some studying—besides, Tom had placed him in charge of the class in Farm Accounts under the supervision of Mr. Whelpley.

Clyde had succumbed to the lure! It has made a new boy of him. What he needed—what all our boys and girls need—is to have work that they can look up to. Tom Whelpley showed Clyde Bohn—as he shows all our young folks—that there is plenty in farming which any man who studies it may well look up to, for it is work for the brain as well as for the brawn. He interprets farm life, and all it needs is interpretation to be seen as the most fascinating business in the world. There is adventure in it, and some money—and what boys need is adventure and some money. Isaiah has made some kind of deal with Clyde which gives him money, now—and he socks it right in the bank. He has quit the baseball team because he is too busy to play. He has undertaken to work out the actual relative profits of labor and capital on all the farms from which the school can get data—and most of us are giving our figures in now—and Tom says Clyde will be an authority on farm economics in ten years. He is a local authority now; and prouder of his farm than he ever was of his baseball.

He is so proud that he is in a great dilemma. He came over to see Marian the other evening to tell her about it. The Farmers' Exchange Bank at the county seat wants a clerk; and twenty town boys are after the job. Mr. Avery, the president of the bank, has attended several of our meetings in the assembly room of the Fairview school, and has been impressed with Clyde's business ability. So he has offered Clyde the place in the bank.

"You'll have a great opportunity for advancement," said Mr. Avery to Isaiah and Clyde. "You have the basis of a fundamental understanding of the farming business. More than half our banking business is with farmers, and we do this with nobody on the directory or holding an office in the institution who understands farming. The coming banker in the Corn Belt ought to be educated in agricultural economics—come with us and you will find plenty of work and responsibility."

Clyde thought of the livery stable around the corner where Plug Rafferty once got him a job, and wondered if it could be really true that he was now offered a place in the great Farmers' Exchange Bank; but the mahogany desks with the plate-glass tops—they were true; and the elegant Mr. Avery with his well-trimmed beard—he was actual; and Clyde's proud father seated in Mr. Avery's private office, and Clyde himself similarly seated—they were verities.

"I tell you, Uncle Abner," said Clyde, the evening when he and Marian came to tell me the wonderful

news, "I couldn't help thinking of all that Mr. Whelpley and the new school have done for me and saved me from!"

"You'd never have gone wrong, anyhow!" said Marian.

"Well," said I, "what are you going to do, Clyde, be a banker, or a farmer?"

"If you don't mind," said Clyde, blushing, "I think I'll leave that to Marian."

## CHAPTER IV

### THE ROMANCE OF A BOOK-FARMER

REAL book-farmers are pretty scarce—and most of them are spurious. The county agent here says to the neighbors that I, Abner Dunham, am the worst mossback in the neighborhood; and proves it, not by that old story of my putting a whip-socket on my automobile, but by what he calls my sneering remarks about book-farming. Now I hold that you can no more learn to farm out of a book than you can learn to swim, or play baseball, or cut hair in the same way. Doctor Spillman's bulletin on the farming of Chester County, Pennsylvania, admits that the farmers who are guided by the general experience of the farming business in their neighborhoods, rather than by theory, constantly tend to make their methods what they ought to be—or they go broke. And that proves my case. If the scientists and theorists ever come to know all the facts and principles of farming well enough to enable them to formulate designs for correct practises, I suppose they will be able to tell us in books just how to farm.

The only man we've had in the Fairview neighborhood to carry book-farming through as a life-work is Jeff Sharpe. To be sure we have had our share of

back-to-the-landers who thought they could read their way to successful agriculture, and visionary people who thought the rest of us fools; and themselves proceeded to fool their farms away by doing everything differently; but it wouldn't be fair to charge such cases to book-farming, because, in all probability they would have failed if they had gone into any other business. But Jeff Sharpe is an example of the man who gave book-farming a perfectly fair chance to succeed.

His full name is Oliver Geoffrey Sharpe, and when he came to the Pup Farm he signed it O. Geoffrey Sharpe. Everybody calls him Jeff, now, however, which shows how civilized he has become. Of course in the meetings of our Cooperative Grain Dealers' Association the wags who deal in lumber and mouldings have nicknamed him Ogee Sharpe; but his sobriquet at the Ridgeway Pup Farm was "Becky Sharp" as a matter of course, as soon as he made his appearance there.

My little granddaughter Marian says that Jeff's story is a wonderful romance, and she hopes to put it in a play sometime. This brings up the question, Can there be such a thing as romance in the Corn Belt? Marian says it is full of romance—but she is now in the midst of her own first adventure in the realms of Faery—you know—young Clyde Bohn. I have seen the Corn Belt, before it received that name, when the very spirit of mystery and promise blew over it—and those things, I have always supposed, are

in themselves unwritten romance. I shall never see its like again. Nobody will ever see its like again. I have seen it when the far-off shoulders of its low hills were blue with violets, or when its anemones were pushing their woolly heads up through the gray grasses under grayer skies; seen it as an ocean whose swells were hills and whose ripples were the shadows on crinkling grasses spreading away as far as the eye could see, unmarred by homestead or stack; I have lived with the wild fowl now gone, the wolves, the gophers, the badgers, and the smooth, harmless snakes; seen the clouds flying over this wonderful prairie, each followed over the knolls by its double in shadow; watched the tornado go ravening over it seeking prey where none was found; breasted the blizzards; heard the triumphant chorus of all the prairie brooks as they rippled out of the patchy snows in the spring sunlight down to the swales, and off with the roaring creeks to the river—and then I have seen the black burnt sod shimmer into the delicate green of April, to pass through every shade of pink, yellow, gold, gray and brown, until the tumble-weeds chased one another from hillock to hollow in the autumn like stampeded brown sheep. I would give anything to see it again; but I never can, for the world does not hold its like.

I have seen all this green sod broken by the plow; and where I saw a desert, I now see a teeming empire of men and women, the best, I am persuaded, in America. All in my life. Perhaps there is no romance in that, but there is something mighty. I have read a

book called "A Foreign Tour at Home," by an elderly New Englander, who not many years ago for the first time went across the continent to California, and could see nothing but what seemed to him rather squalid and dismal in the Corn Belt. He didn't like our endless succession of farms, each with a house of no particular style of architecture, and tower-like silos, and big red barns. The roads were not good, they were all distinctly straight, and ran north and south or east and west. The whole country seemed unkempt, to him—not realizing how much there is of it to be kempt and how few people there are per square mile to kemb it. To him there was no romance or beauty in the groves we planted in the prairie and which now stand tall and green about the farmsteads, nor in the long rows of waving corn, or the sleek herds of cows and the feed-yards peopled with fat steers dividing their time between alfalfa in the racks and corn in the troughs, with an occasional nibble at the lush blue-grass in the pastures. Well, maybe there isn't any beauty in it, but it looks good to us. I honestly believe that this New Englander, who is a literary man, was repelled from the Corn Belt's beauties because of the straight lines, the absence of great areas wasted in the grounds of gentlemen—in short, because it didn't look like England. We get most of our literary farming from British writers.

And in that opinion Mr. O. Geoffrey Sharpe would have agreed with him when he arrived at the Pup Farm. He was twenty-five or so, and had been shipped

over from that same England by a family who couldn't for their lives find a place for him there. If we are to understand young Sharpe, we must know what the Pup Farm was—and, in my opinion, a real writer could make more of a story of that than of Jeff's career. If Dickens of his Dotheboys Hall and its Mr. Squeers made immortal literature, I should think a writer who knew his business could do as well with Major Ridgeway and his Pup Farm—even if it was in the Corn Belt.

Major Ridgeway was an Englishman who came in about the time of the German invasion in the Mid-West, bought a goodish tract of land in the western part of the Wheeler's Crossroads District, and went into farming. He built a house on the plan, I am told, of an English country home, though probably not so fine; but it was a good deal too much house for the farm. It made the overhead too big for profits. The major was a pompous, red-whiskered, toppy chap who came over the sea expecting to found an estate, a family line, and all the rest of it on the European plan. A considerable number of men did the same thing in the sixties. I can recall now the cases of Doctor Knopf, a German professor; Conrad Schwagermann, a German landowner, who sold out and came; Thomas O'Hara, an Irish squire; and a Frenchman named Fournier who came from France to Quebec and then to this country. They all failed, because land was plenty, and Americans would not work for these gentry for less than they could earn working for them-

selves; and if the gentry paid the scale, they could, as a matter of course make no profits; since when a man gets all he makes there is nothing left for his employer. In the same wave of immigration there came thousands of poverty-stricken peasants who succeeded, where the men with capital and aristocratic notions almost always failed. The reason is perfectly obvious. The only way to succeed was to produce, and the only way to produce was to work; gentlemen could not work, while peasants could and would. Major Ridgeway occupied himself for several years in finding out that for some reason he was gradually sliding downhill into bankruptcy by the operation of a farm of the richest land on earth; and in looking out for a remedy he hit upon the idea of establishing a school in which young Britons might learn American agriculture, and thus avoid the failure which it was beginning to be suspected was likely to overtake the non-working landowner on the cheap lands of the United States.

This school was the Pup Farm. Of course that was not its correct name, but we never thought of calling it by any other. I happen to know how the name originated, because I remember when the old major established kennels of various kinds of dogs and tried to sell their progeny. Naturally a simple people who called a farm from which pigs were sold a hog farm called Major Ridgeway's estate a Pup Farm; but after he had restocked it with scions of British gentility the name stuck, and, I believe, had something to do with the more or less well-founded popular notion that

these young men each represented a skeleton in the closet of a rich and possibly titled British family. So, you see we despised Ridgeway's Pups; and they certainly looked down on us, whether they did us the honor of concerning themselves so far as to despise us or not. And Jeff Sharpe was one of Ridgeway's Pups.

Alice Bailey, a niece of mine, was a country school-teacher in those days, and was keeping the Wheeler Crossroads School. The Ridgeway farm and a school section were in that district, and neither of these were the homes of children: so her school was small—only half a dozen pupils, and often none at all. In going to and from school she followed a road which ran over the prairie in those curves which our esthetic eastern critics so much miss; but Ridgeway had begun to break the prairie, and was trying to make the teams on the road follow the section line. You know, however, that it takes two or three years to subdue the soil of an old prairie trail, and Alice still followed the hard path through the Pup Farm fields in spite of the panels of fence which shut off the teams.

One day as she topped a knoll, she saw one of Major Ridgeway's farm teams in difficulties. The horses were hitched to an old-fashioned square harrow with forty sharp steel teeth, twenty in each section. The driver had attempted to turn the harrow too short, and it had begun to double up. The outer section of the harrow rose in the air and drove the teeth of the other section down into the earth. This lifted the doubletree at one end, and tended to pull the traces under the feet

of the inside horse and over the back of the outer. The horses had begun to prance—for the major liked spirited horses, even for farm work—and Alice, who had been reared on a farm, knew that if they were not turned back so as to let the harrow straighten out, it would be upset, tangle the team up in the gear, and, possibly, if he hung to the lines, throw the driver on the sharp teeth, now sticking out instead of down; or if he let them go, the runaway horses would almost certainly jerk the harrow upon themselves and be torn as by bayonets. The driver seemed utterly incompetent to straighten out the tangle, which was fast becoming really dangerous; so Alice ran to the horses' bits, turned them sharply to the right and eased them forward. The harrow straightened, the right-hand section coming down with a sharp chop, and when Alice had quieted the horses and looked back, she saw the driver lifting the harrow to release his foot. Instead of keeping out of the way, as any farmer would have done he had stood helplessly gazing at the girl who was so skilfully getting him out of his scrape—and had got a steel spike three-quarters of an inch thick right through the flat part of his foot.

"Thank you very much," said he, lifting his hat. "Very stupid of me to do that. I'm a beastly duffer, you know, at this work!"

"You're hurt!" she exclaimed, looking at the blood gushing up out of his boot. "Oh, you're awfully hurt!"

"Oh, not at all I assure you," he replied—and keeled

over in the dirt. A spike through the foot will put a man out as soon as anything I know of.

Alice tied the team to a wagon standing near, dragged the fool Englishman to a clean, hard spot in the old road, with a tussock of grass for a pillow, ran back to the schoolhouse for water and some remedies she kept there in case any of the children should get hurt, ran back, doused his face with the water and brought him to; and then, against his weak protests, took off his boot and sock, cleansed the wound of dirt with water and spirits of camphor, wrapped it up with torn linen which she evolved from the surrounding circumstances, flooded it with tincture of arnica, put on an outer covering made of a grain bag which she found in the wagon, helped him to the spring seat, threw into the wagon his boot and sock, drove him to the Lodge, as they called the Pup Farm, and delivered him to Major Ridgeway's man Pulver; who notified the major, I suppose, that young Sharpe, who had just come in, had already rendered the major liable on his contract to give his pupils medical attention as a part of the quid pro quo for the seventy-five pounds a year each which he charged for their board and tuition.

This was "Becky's" introduction to the Pup Farm's curriculum. Major Ridgeway's course of study consisted of family prayers every morning, to keep his contract for religious and moral surroundings; and for the rest of the day the boys were supposed to absorb agriculture from the plow-handle, the lines of the

farm harness, curry-combs, the teats of cows, and other practical farm contacts. It was exactly like Mr. Squeers' plan of making his boys work in the grounds and garden; with no pretense, however, on the part of Major Ridgeway in the direction of book or laboratory study.

We farmers envied the major at first his shrewdness in actually obtaining nearly four hundred dollars cash, apiece, annually, for keeping his hands, while the rest had not only to keep them but also to pay them for their work. It looked to us as if he had the southern slaveholders beaten in the labor market by exactly seventy-five pounds a year per head. But we did not understand the Pups. Britons never can be slaves—and these chaps were typical Britons. They averaged pretty high in wildness. They certainly gave the county seat a rich carmine tint; for while all of them were supposed to be in exile, some for their sins, and others because their families could not afford to give them a financial start in England, they all had more money than any of us possessed. Their remittances were struggled for by the saloons, and gambled for by our local tinhorns. The Farmers' Saloon changed its name to the House of Lords, and Jimmie Preston, once a British soldier, was made its manager by the German brewers who owned it. On the other side of the street Julius Hoffman, a German saloon keeper, who owned his own place, renamed it The Senate, to cater to the American trade. Our local poker-players taught the Britons their peculiar art; to which they took much more nat-

urally than to American agriculture at the Pup Farm. The major found it impossible to enforce discipline; and it took as much effort to get a day's work out of the Pups as the labor was worth. He got his yearly fees for keeping them, and he had the questionable pleasure of their company when they were at the Lodge, and that is about all.

Jeff was pretty nearly as wild as any of them. There was no studying to be done, and he sensed the graft there was for the major in his work; and what was there for him to do but join the gang? He and a young fellow named Wyatt—nicknamed "Puffin"—were the most industrious of the crowd, however. "Puffin," through a series of unexpected deaths in his family, became rich and succeeded to a title, and for a long time before his death sat in the British House of Lords, where he made only one speech. It was on the subject of "The Influence of the Settlement of the Prairie States of America on British Agriculture." It made Lord Wyatt an authority on conditions prevailing in American farming; and he had the good sense not to try speaking on anything else. He and "Becky" worked off and on, until something happened in England which cut off Jeff's remittances. He had been cleaned out at poker just after receiving his last check, and was dead broke. Major Ridgeway immediately kicked him out, and in view of the fact that the check gambled away had contained the major's "tuition" money, this was only business. At that, Jeff was no worse off than the rest of us, since he

had his health, his two hands, and a good education. It was only his bringing up that made it seem to him that he faced starvation.

He and Alice had cultivated by carefully-arranged accidents a sort of clandestine acquaintance ever since the harrow accident. She was fond of birds; and Jeff had made a collection of nests in England, and knew the names of more birds than Alice did; so they used to walk about the country, generally accompanied by one or two of the pupils of her school, looking at birds with Jeff's opera glasses, and looking them up in a book which Jeff procured. He also showed her how to make an herbarium. These accomplishments on his part seemed to her, I have no doubt, perfectly wonderful things; for she was only an ignorant frontier school-teacher whose easy examination in the common branches had been none too easy for her. Yet, notwithstanding Jeff's marvelous knowledge of the world, of birds and plants, and in spite of his nice manners; Alice knew that she should not go about with him. For he was a wicked, gambling, roistering fellow, who was supposed to be either a fugitive from justice, or the illegitimate son of some Englishman who had shipped him to get rid of him. He never spoke of his family. It was hard to induce him to speak of himself. He treated her beautifully, and to walk about with him was just like reading a book, but he was certainly not a man to whom she could stoop. Besides, he was a foreigner, and his manner of mouthing his English would make him the laughing-stock of any gathering

of the sort of people she knew; and—well, there was no use in even thinking about it. And what was "it" anyhow? There was no "it."

When Jeff was kicked off the Pup Farm Major Ridgeway sent his luggage to the station and took a check for it of the station agent. When this check was delivered to Jeff it constituted a receipt in full from the Sharpe family to Major Ridgeway for one son received in a damaged condition and abandoned in similar state. Jeff told the major he would walk to town. He wanted to think. He had no money with which to pay his fare to England or anywhere else. He had no skill in anything but shooting, tennis, polo, and various games of chance—and in the latter his skill was in no way equal to his enthusiasm. What should he do? He had been sent off by his family because he was wild and they couldn't afford the luxury of keeping him—and Major Ridgeway's correspondence did seem to show that Geoffrey might easily win a competence in America in a few years. Besides, it saved the family's face to be able to tell their friends that Geoffrey had gone rawnching in America where the millionaires are manufactured. In a country overcrowded with folks too good to work, the Sharpes are really not to be blamed, I suppose. The boy was bitter, and ashamed, and miserable, and perplexed and in despair. He wanted to walk to town and think—and he may have been aware of the fact that the road to town took him by Alice Bailey's schoolhouse.

Anyhow, it did, and when he had passed it a few

rods he stopped and sat for a while on a boulder which some old glacier had dropped there. His heart was beating rather high, and his hands were trembling. He was thirsty, too; and he knew that Alice always kept a tin pail of water on a bench in the schoolroom. Would she give him to drink? He would ask—and he walked up to the outer door, which was open, and through the entry-hall to the inner one which was closed. There was no sound within, no hum of recitation, no shuffling of feet, no piping voices pleading "Please, kin I leave my seat?" or "Please, may I speak?" There was only the droning hum coming down through the open hatch leading up into the raftered attic of the mud-wasps plying their masonry on the beams. He listened long, and as he listened he looked repeatedly at his valuable English gold watch. It was noon, and there should have been the restless racket which precedes the letting out of school—but he could hear nothing. So he gently opened the door and looked in.

It was one of those days, not so very rare, when none of Alice's pupils had come. She was alone at her cheap pine desk only four or five feet before him, facing the array of empty seats and the shabby little schoolroom. Or, she would have been facing them if she had not had her head bowed on a big book lying on the desk—a book which Jeff recognized as the herbarium. He saw that she was crying; and when she raised her head at the sound of the creaking door, her face was streaming with tears.

"I say!" he stammered. "I thought, you know—"

"Oh," she cried, "they said you'd gone back to England!"

I have no idea what took place then, save that Alice and Jeff ate Alice's lunch—and that when she had conscientiously remained at her post until three, they walked four miles over to my farm, and Alice introduced Jeff as a young friend of hers who wanted a job as a farm hand. When my wife found that he was one of the Ridgeway Pups, she wanted me to send him packing for Alice's sake; but I convinced her that we couldn't send the fellow away hungry; and that in common decency we'd have to keep him over night and take him to town the next day. She saw the justice of this, and by the time Jeff had eaten her meat and her salt, and spent half an hour in converse with her and Alice, she was for giving him a chance. She was even willing to let him take a horse and buggy and drive Alice back to her boarding place.

I don't see how it is possible for an Englishman to be poor as a permanent thing, they have so many rich aunts. This I know, that the ones domesticated among us through the Ridgeway Pup Farm—and twenty or thirty must have become permanencies—seemed always to be getting legacies from aunts. Jeff hadn't been working for me three months—not long enough to have become even a passable hand, green as he was—when he got a legacy from an aunt. It amounted to four or five thousand dollars. He finished his month's work, so as to give me a chance to get another hand, and the next thing we heard we were asked to go to the little Epis-

copal rectory in the county seat to see him married to Alice. At the wedding he told my wife and me that he had bought the farm on which Conrad Schwagermann, the German gentleman mentioned a while ago, had achieved bankruptcy. The bank had bought it in at sheriff's sale, and sold it to Jeff Sharpe. I suspect that they did this to prevent Jeff's legacy from getting across the county line.

"Why," said I, "you didn't have money enough to pay for that big farm!"

"No," said he, "I had barely enough to pay for the equipment. I owe for the whole bally farm. But I think we can make it go, don't you know!"

I told him the farm was too big for him; that he should have bought only what he could pay for; but he was amazingly cheerful, and so was Alice.

"Really, you know," said he in that style of talk that they call the "Haw-Haw Englishman" style up in Western Canada—"Really, you know, I'm quite sure I can organize other men's labor to more advantage than I can my own. I'm quite an ass at manual labor, personally, don't you know!"

Neither of them knew much farming; but they tackled the proposition with all the assurance of youth. Jeff was looked down on by the surrounding farmers because he was one of Ridgeway's Pups, even while they recognized the fact that a man who knew Latin and French and played the flute—even though he played it wretchedly—was in many ways their superior. They resented his superiority. The women assumed

the pose toward Alice that she had thrown herself away; and that certainly she couldn't expect a man of Jeff's history to be true to her. So Jeff and Alice retired from circulation. They became a sort of dual hermit. Knowing nothing of farming as a means of livelihood, and having no relations with any of his neighbors, Jeff was forced to become a book-farmer. He deliberately sat down to learn farming from the printed page.

Once in two years or so, I suppose, I used to drive in at the old Schwagermann house to see Alice, and take a look about at what was doing in Jeff's farming; and I heard strange things of him all the time. The next winter after they were married the news came to us that Alice and Jeff had moved to East St. Louis. When I heard that they had returned I went over, and learned that Jeff had been working all winter for a commission firm in the stock-yards there. When he asked them for work, they told him they didn't want him; and when he asked if he could work for them for nothing, so as to have a look at the cattle business, they said he might start in on that basis, but they could give no assurances as to the permanency of the job. On this basis he had worked, and worked hard all winter loading and unloading steers, driving them from yard to yard, running them up the great chutes to the killing rooms, and especially hanging about the selling yards to get a view of the inside of the business, and acquire the knack of telling a good steer from a poor one, either in the finished state, or as feeders and stock-

ers. Lighter in purse, but filled with enthusiasm for cattle, he came back with Alice to the Schwagermann farm, and tackled farming on a nine hundred acre scale.

Everybody laughed at his farming. We saw his blunders, which were obvious and expensive. We saw fields knobby with clods because he had plowed when it was too wet. We saw great corn-fields made hard to cultivate because of the failure of some new tool which was tried on a big scale instead of a small one. We saw stacks built to carry the rains in instead of out. We saw corn-fields half tended because he tried to do too much with the force of men he had; but we saw these and his many other bad practises corrected from year to year. One thing struck me in the beginning of his farming as probably wiser than the practise of the rest of us; he bought all the strawpiles within two miles of his place—which would in those days in the ordinary course of things have been burned to get them off the land—and hauled them to Sharpesmoor, as he called his farm. He had established relations with the cattle men in the stock-yards, so that they let him have credit for all the cattle he wanted; but most of the stock which he roughed through the winters on the wheat, oats, rye, and barley straw obtained for little or nothing, except for the hauling, he picked up in the Fairview neighborhood. His wasn't fancy stock-raising, but it was adapted to the conditions at that time. The cattle weren't toppers; but they were kept on cheap feed, and I could see, though

he never came near me or any one else except on business, that he couldn't be losing money, and I began cautiously to follow his lead. For one thing, I saw that that business of hauling straw and working it up in the barnyards gave Jeff such a supply of manure that in spite of his poor field management—now getting better rapidly—his crops were on the average heavy. He got this theory of the keeping up of soil fertility out of his books. It was a new thing in the Corn Belt —but we've all learned it since.

A horse laugh went through the neighborhood when it was learned that Jeff had had a wagon load of dirt shipped from California, and had scattered it over a field on which he had sowed some new kind of clover seed. *The Clarion,* our county paper, had a piece in it telling how Mr. O. Geoffrey Sharpe had shipped in the seed of a new kind of clover, and had sowed a load of the soil it grew in on the Coast, "so it would feel at home in the Mississippi Valley." On being questioned, Mr. Sharpe stated that *The Clarion* account was "fairly accurate." Then we forgot about the soil shipment in glee at his soaking his seed oats and seed potatoes in "drugs." He was the first man to inoculate soil for alfalfa in our part of the country—that was the soil shipment. I myself lived to pay him two dollars a load for soil from that same field when I saw the sort of crop alfalfa is—and nobody laughed at me. He was the first man to act on the scientific fact that leguminous crops must have certain bacteria on their roots, and he shipped that earth to get the bacteria. It

was a new thing even to the scientists—so don't think the rest of us too shockingly benighted. Jeff was the first man to treat his seed grains for smut—and after about ten years, during which he had oats by the carload every year without a trace of smut in them, we gradually woke up to the fact that the fool Englishman knew something we didn't. I noticed from year to year that he had an increasing area in potatoes, and that their foliage remained green until frost, while ours died in August.

"How do you account for it, Jeff?" I asked him, after two or three years of this.

"I spray 'em with Paris green for the bugs, and Bordeaux mixture for blight," he answered.

"I wonder if the spray has anything to do with the vines staying green that way," I mused.

"Oh, rather!" said Jeff. "I tried it last year, and really there is no doubt of it. The blight is a disease, and the spray kills the germs."

All this is old stuff now, but it wasn't then. To be sure we had been using the Paris green for potato bugs for many years, and all of us had seen pieces in the farm papers about Bordeaux mixture; but it looked to us like college-professor dope that the editors put in the papers because the professors sent it to them, and they had to have something to fill up with. But it turned out to be a fact that the blight could be controlled in that way. Jeff Sharpe grew the best crops of potatoes in the county for five years before his neighbors realized that he had something they hadn't.

I have always thought myself as good a cattle feeder as the next man; and I felt a little edgewise at Jeff Sharpe because he never came over and talked with me about feeding. He was married to my niece, and we always attended their christenings; and it seemed that he really owed it to himself and the family to take my advice once in a while; but he never came near. One Sunday Jeff's yard man came over to join my hired man in a fishing trip—I suppose this must have been ten years after Jeff had started in on the Schwagermann farm.

"You'll be back late," I said to Ole, when they told me how far they were going. "Well, stay as late as you please. I'll do the noon and night feeding."

"You're back numbers," said Jeff's hired man. "We don't have any noon and night feeding."

"You don't!" I said in some astonishment. "Then you're not finishing the steers this year?"

"We sure are," said he. "We're finishing some car lots that are going to the International Fat Stock Show."

"Then what do you mean," said I, "by that balderdash about not feeding at noon and night?"

"We feed once a day," he replied as they drove off. "They won't see any more feed until eight o'clock tomorrow morning."

Now by this time I had begun to have a suspicion that Jeff was not plumb weak-minded. It seemed to me that he was about as smart as any one. This system of feeding, however, was certainly a crazy one,

as I could plainly see in the light of years of experience; so my wife and I drove over to see Alice that afternoon, only to find that she and Jeff and the children had gone on a bird-studying and plant-collecting picnic away over beyond Indian Ridge, where there is a swamp, and lots of bobolinks and marsh wrens and some natural timber. There was nobody at home but a hired girl—and all those fine steers out there in the yards needing to be fed. In a few days I saw Jeff and asked him about this hired man's tale. It was quite true, he said, that he had adopted the plan of feeding his steers only once a day. He was feeding alfalfa hay and corn-and-cob meal, with plenty of running water in the yards. He hauled in a weighed-out feed of a fixed number of pounds of alfalfa hay per animal each morning, put it in the racks, and let the cattle run to it; also he placed in the troughs all the corn-and-cob meal needed for twenty-four hours, and let the steers eat hay or corn according to their tastes and fancies until it was gone—which would be about the time the next feed came in.

"I find," said he, "that it cuts down the expense for labor—and that's our chief problem. It makes the men feel better, too, to be able to take a whole day off, as Nels did the Sunday you speak of."

"But, my boy," said I, "you can't get gains on cattle that will pay by any such system of feeding. Nobody does it. Steers have to have fresh feed before them often to keep them eating. You'll lose money—and

you can't possibly get quality on your beeves. You'll see when you ship!"

"I was afraid that might be so," said he, "so last year I divided my cattle into two lots, one of which I fed three times a day, and the other once. I found that there was no difference either in quality or gain."

"There wasn't!" I was astonished—though I might have expected that experimenting of his. "There wasn't!"

"Well," said Jeff, "the hundred and fifty cattle I fed only once a day made a little better gains, and the buyers liked them a nickel a hundred better—but I think the feeding system had nothing to do with that. There happened to be a few extra good steers in the bunch. Feeding once, twice, or three times a day is a matter of no importance, I think, as feeding, though, of course, you have three times the chances to make mistakes when feeding three times a day."

"Where did you get this idea?" I asked after sitting and looking at him for a while.

"I read it in Henry's *Feeds and Feeding*," he replied. "I never was in another man's feed yard in my life."

"Out of a book!" said I disgustedly—and drove off. And I still feed my cattle twice a day, even though Jeff's steers did make a good record at the International. I can not, I simply can not seem to make myself feel that Jeff's way is not negligent and slovenly, in spite of the fact that he turns off just as good

beeves as I do. In fact, sometimes the buyers think they dress out a little better; but I shall never believe that the figures from the killing room are correct —and if they are, the reason for his beeves being a shade better than mine probably lies in the fact that he is lucky in getting a better-bred grade of feeders.

When this little competition in fat cattle began between Jeff and me, I had some doubts on the subject of the importance of blood in beef cattle—remember, that was a long time ago. But Jeff read books on breeds, and his experience at the stock-yards backed up the doctrines in the books, and while the rest of us thought that the whole difference between the scrub and the pure-bred is a matter of feed and shelter, Jeff adopted from his reading the theory that blood is the foundation of good beef, and feed and shelter the means of building the superstructure. Living apart from everybody as he did, he didn't know what we thought, and we were ignorant of his views, and supposed that he was buying Angus, Shorthorn and Hereford steers because of an aristocratic preference for looks and the name of the thing. Now we know a whole lot better.

All this time—or most of it—Jeff might as well have been an absentee landlord for all the good he did to the neighborhood. He saw in the beginning that country life in the Corn Belt was a mighty poor and unorganized thing; and he was used to the caste system of English country life with its well-marked gradations of rank, its richly developed social system, its

leisure, its wealth, its culture, its squires and knights, its barons and lords, and underneath all, its peasantry which knew its place. He didn't understand his own place in American life. Here was he, a man who owned his farm, and had a large and good one, gradually becoming the richest and best-managed in the county; and he couldn't keep domestic help for his wife half the time. As for servants in the British sense, long before he was able to bear the expense of them he saw that they were not to be had at any expense. He was not looked up to in the least because of his proprietorship of the farm; and soon got used to having his hired men call him Jeff or anything else they happened to think of. His wife was a girl of the prevailing social type—a large, dark-eyed, imposing woman who worshiped him, and of whom he was very fond; and she was used to our conditions. That's what saved him from the worst friction with his circumstances; to which he adjusted himself by ignoring the rest of the community, and devoting himself to his business and to his growing family, which now included quite a flock of the nicest children I ever saw.

And it was the children that gradually brought the Sharpe family into touch with the neighborhood. Jeff and Alice began by attempting to teach them themselves; which was hard enough when there was only little Bailey, but became impossible when the twins, Isabel and Wyatt—named after Lord Puffin—joined the squad. The others arrived, and at school age they had to be sent to the district school; and the first time

ten of us ever saw Jeff Sharpe at the same time was when he went to the township school meeting to air his views about school matters. We found that he could talk pretty well, and after the meeting was over he told me that if we had a few more as able men as half a dozen who were present we might do things.

Then the state college sent an alfalfa demonstration train to the county, and the professor in charge of it asked Jeff to invite the neighbors to Sharpesmoor to see what he had accomplished with alfalfa—which he did, and gave us a mighty good time. The professor took us from field to field, and asked Jeff to tell us how he did it, and again we found that he was a good talker, and a man of the keenest common sense. We began to forget that he had been one of Ridgeway's Pups—in fact I had about forgotten it long before that. Alice served us tea and sandwiches and cakes, and we had the time of our lives. Two or three editors asked Jeff to write for their papers. He tells me that on that day he began to have a vision of what American rural life is, as he said, "in process of becoming."

Well, everybody in the Corn Belt knows about O. G. Sharpe now, through his writings for the farm press, and his addresses at meetings of farmers, stockmen, and people interested in rural life. He is on the school board of the Fairview Consolidated Rural School, and teaches classes in feeds and feeding for Tom Whelpley. He is a member of Frank Wiggins' congregation in the old Winebrennerian Church, though he also

maintains his connection with the Episcopal Church, in the county seat. There is no more useful citizen in the county, nor a better farmer—if he did dig it all out of books. I have about made up my mind that if the rest of us would study books as he did, and intelligently modify our practise by their doctrines it would be better for all of us; and Jeff admits that he would have saved himself a lot of mistakes if he had not been too proud to study what we were doing during those first hard years when he and Alice lay awake nights wondering whether or not they would be able to make their payments on the mortgage and prevent foreclosure. For him to have failed would have been a descent into the pit; for he had no friends then.

All this time, Alice was wondering whether or not there was anything wrong with Jeff's history "at home" as he called England, though he had long since become an American citizen—and could be elected to county office if he wanted to be—the farmers would see to that. As for the city vote, his being a director in the Farmers' Exchange Bank would help some, I'm sure. Alice never asked him about his people, and he never told her, except that they were "typical middle-class English people." Now to Alice this didn't mean much; but at what it did mean to her she was not much overjoyed. To her, upper-class people were those who were industrious and honest, and not really poor; but a very poor person who was honest and very intellectual, like Mrs. Doctor Asbury at the county seat, was certainly "upper class." As for other classes, there was

the lower class, consisting of the worthless, criminal, and immoral of society. Old Dan Fifer, who was very rich, but lived a life of open immorality, and made his money as a loan shark, was certainly, to Alice's mind, a member of the lower classes, though his ancestors came over in the *Mayflower*. A middle-class person, she reasoned, must be somewhere in between these; and that certainly was nothing to be proud of. Probably Geoffrey had done the only proper thing when he cut himself off from that middle-class family; since he was now indisputably upper class—honest, able, and a successful farmer, respected by all.

Therefore, Alice was not lifted to any great spiritual height when the family in England began to write Jeff. He began to speak, too, of changes in the family which seemed to make it necessary for him to go back. They wanted his advice on the family business. Evidently, Alice told my wife, they had found out that Jeff was doing well and wanted to tag along after him as he ascended the hill.

They never sent any word to Alice, nor asked for her picture, nor the children's. So far as Alice knew, Jeff's family were not aware of her existence—which, as a matter of fact, they were not. Jeff admitted to me that for a year or so the exchanges of letters were very cold and businesslike. If the family had become wealthy again, as they seemed to have done, Jeff felt that it was their affair. They had inferred that he could swim in America, and never looked to see whether or not he might not be sinking. The old

estrangement had solidified with time in Jeff's mind; and he refused to tell them about his family, or tell the family about them—he was too proud and embittered at first; and after all these years, he could not approach the subject without embarrassment. He felt a barrier between him and the explanations he should have made; and finally, when it became absolutely necessary, he packed up Alice and all the children, and sailed for England without explanations.

Alice came over to consult with her Aunt Lucy about the clothes she should wear. "Of course," said she, "Jeff's people being only middle-class folks, we shan't be in need of much in the way of clothes. I can't lug a lot of dresses about the world. Do you suppose I shall need any evening dresses?"

"No-o-o," advised my wife, "I should think not. Just take what street and traveling dresses you will need; and if you are invited out, that broadcloth suit with the silk waist that you wore to the meeting of the International Congress of Farm Women will be plenty good enough."

Well, you ought to read the letter Alice wrote her aunt after she got to England. I think I'll give you some of it.

"If I ever wanted to cuff anybody's ears," wrote she, "I want to do it to Jeff's, as he sits before me now—but they are so red with embarrassment at the pickle he put me in that I shall have to forgive him. Why he has deceived me all these years I have no idea; and why he let me come so unprepared and to be so humili-

ated will always be a mystery. He says that he couldn't explain everything, and he really didn't see the perfectly impossible situation into which he was steering me. I thought I should die!"

"I told Alice," said my wife, looking up from the letter, "that she was foolish to marry without knowing what she was marrying into! Well, thank goodness they're in England—and Jeff's certainly pure gold, even though his folks may be the professional horse-thieves of the British Isles!"

"I won't tell you about London, or Liverpool, because I have so much else to tell. We went southwest, or southeast, from London two or three hours by train, and got off at the prettiest little village you ever saw —reminds me of the picture of Stratford-on-Avon, only different—and were met at the station by a man with a carriage—a big, roomy carriage—but he seemed a little dismayed by the number of children. He seemed glad to see Geoff; and I could see that they were acquainted, because he called Geoff 'Mr. Geoffrey,' and Geoff called him 'Dawson'; and told him that Master Bailey would ride in the cart with the luggage, and we'd find room for the rest in the carriage. I thought it funny that none of the family came, and that they had sent a hack for us; but I have learned since not to be surprised. We drove along the prettiest roads I ever saw, and between the greenest fields, and finally turned in at a huge gate into a park, with a great house like a picture in it.

" 'This is Oakhurst Park, my dear,' said Geoff.

" 'A very pretty park, too,' said I. 'Do your folks live near it?'

"'Yes!' said Geoff, 'in point of fact, they live—' And before he got through humming and hawing we had driven up to the door, a liveried servant had opened it, little Bailey had arrived in the cart and we were all ushered into that fine house with as much ceremony as if it had been the governor's reception!

"Well, Aunt Lucy, that fine house is Geoff's old home; and I can understand why he was so miserable many years ago; and I can see that he is easily comforted when he tells me that I am the only thing that made it possible for him to get used to living as we used to live when we were younger. And his people are perfectly lovely! I find that middle class here takes in some pretty way-up people—it is the class just below the aristocracy in social standing. I have been the most foolish and ignorant woman in the world! But I must tell you about my clothes. When we arrived, and had been welcomed with all due warmth by the family—and that's not any too warm—we were assigned our rooms—such beautiful old rooms!—and told by the maid—they keep a lot of servants—I have counted ten and am finding new ones all the time—the time of the dinner hour. I went down in that suit that you and I agreed would be plenty good enough—and found a lot of guests, and every man, including Geoff, in evening dress, and every woman of course! I felt like death. I will say this for them, they never seemed to notice it.

"After dinner, Geoff's mother came up to see me, and after we had talked a while, I said, 'Mrs. Sharpe' (I wouldn't for the world have called her anything else yet), 'Mrs. Sharpe, I have an explanation and a request to make of you.'

"'Yes, my deah,' said she, and I began to feel friendly toward her.

"'My husband,' said I, 'has never told me anything about his family. I inferred, however, that they were not—not the sort of people who live in this style.'

"'Quite so!' she said. 'Geoff is like that. No swank, you know.'

"'Well,' said I, 'I wish he had had a little more swank. If he had not treated me in this shabby way, I'd have brought clothes with me. I shall never forgive him!'

"'Oh, yes, you will, my deah,' said she. 'I hope you'll never have anything worse to forgive. All the Sharpes are like that. Explanations and descriptions bore them, and they let every one play off his own bat—and we women who are married to them are obliged to forgive their impassivity.'

"She said this, patting me on the arm—and I burst into tears. I will say this for her, that she helped me very tactfully; and then said, 'My deah, your explanation is entirely adequate. I think you said you had a request also?'

"'It is this,' said I. 'Please let me keep my room, until you can take me to a shop, and help me select some clothes.'

"'My deah,' said she, 'nothing can give an elderly woman more pleasure than to help buy clothes for a young and beautiful one of whom she feels sure she is going to be very fond!'

"And then I said, 'Thank you, Mother!'

"'We'll run down to London in the morning,' said she."

Alice is bent on moving to England, where Geoff's interests are about as large as here, even though he is a younger son; but Geoff has become interested in our neighborhood affairs, and refuses to go. The fact is,

he is hopelessly Americanized. He says that the governess system in vogue in England for the education of girls is something deadly, as compared with the privileges we can give them here.

"And then, Uncle Abner," said he—it was the first time he ever called me anything but Mr. Dunham—"I feel that the rural life of England is more beautiful than sound; and it is a decaying thing. Ours is just beginning to find itself—in most places it is not even doing that. I can't forego the privilege you know, of having a hand in molding it while it is beginning, so to speak. Over there life takes note of what is past. Here we can face what is to come, and can build up a country life in which science, art, music, and democracy will all be fused into the best the world has seen. I'm going to stay in it; and keep my sons and daughters in and for it!"

And then he blushed, and said, "Let's have a look at the steers!"

## CHAPTER V

### FAIRVIEW'S NEW HIRED MAN

I GET such letters occasionally—and they make me sick. They give me a sharp, darting, spasmodic pain. The last one of the sort came from the head of a Social Center Conference in the East. "Dear Mr. Dunham," it reads, "The work done in your community by yourself, the Reverend Frank Wiggins and Doctor Thomas Whelpley is, I know, very important, and I would like to know more about it. You have the most completely socialized rural community in America—" and more of that sort of rot.

We are not a socialistic community—nor anarchistic, either. We had a few populist votes in the era of General Weaver, and there is one Socialist vote almost every presidential election, and I think I know who casts it; but I would no more accuse him of it without better evidence than I possess than I would without proof indict him for body-snatching. That's my attitude, and our attitude, and it makes us rather furious to be accused of Socialism or anything that sounds like it. We are a solid farming community in the Corn Belt, with lands worth from a hundred and fifty to two hundred dollars an acre, and having hard

work to make both ends meet on that basis of capitalization.

I have told you that a great many of our older families have abandoned their farms for city life and turned them over to tenants, and the fight we have been making to keep our neighborhood life from absolutely going to pot on account of the mania for retiring from Fairview. I have given a part of the history of the twentieth-century rural church pioneering of Daisy and Frank Wiggins in giving us a new kind of country church. As for the individual referred to in this letter as "Doctor Thomas Whelpley," he is not a doctor of anything, nor a Thomas either. His full name is Tom Whelpley, and he is the Fairview District's New Hired Man. Now let us see how much his work, and Frank Wiggins', and Daisy's—I have done nothing, as any of them will tell you, but, in my mossback way, try to have whip-sockets put on the motor-car of progress—justifies this epithet of "a socialized community."

Just another word on this accusation that we have been doing something revolutionary and socialistic in our neighborhood: As a matter of fact, what have we been doing? We have been applying the old New England public school and town meeting idea to our present-day life. We brought the best of New England to the Corn Belt in prairie schooners before the great Civil War. We've got the old machine on our hands. Is it socialistic to repair it?

Frank Wiggins just dropped in and looked over

what I have written, and smiled in that quiet way of his at what he calls my heat in the matter. "Why so hot, little man?" said he, quoting somebody, and not meaning any slur. "Why object to the name of socialism if the thing itself suits you?"

But do you suppose I am going to sit down tamely and accept statements which will give that one Socialist voted in the whole township the laugh on me? Not if this court knows itself, and it thinks it does.

Why, our good luck in getting Tom Whelpley as the Neighborhood Hired Man is the direct result of our conservatism. Frank Wiggins reads more farm papers than any other farmer in the district; and if he were consistent would take his text on Sunday from the writings of Dean Henry, or Liberty Bailey, or Joe Wing, or Henry Wallace, or Doctor Hopkins, or Governor Hoard, rather than from the Bible. I told him so one day, and the next Sunday, just to show me that the Bible is an agricultural book he preached from Isaiah 7:25: "And on all hills that shall be digged with the mattock, there shall not come thither the fear of briers and thorns: but it shall be for the sending forth of oxen, and for the treading of lesser cattle." It was a plea for the cattle-feeding business as a religious function! The Reverend Frank always comes back at us.

He is possessed of an apostolic foolhardiness, a holy boldness which would have carried him successfully to the stake in an earlier day; and is always trying to force on us old farmers his views as to new ways of

doing our business; but we don't mind, and when he goes too far we turn him down cold. He always means well, and usually we humor him. When the idea became popular of having the Department at Washington and the state college of agriculture cooperate in sending experts into the various counties to do what Doctor Spillman calls demonstration work, the Reverend Frank wanted our county to have the first one in the North—the South had had them for a long time even then. Having chiseled me out of fifteen acres of swamp land and worked Abel Bohn into letting him dump the water from it on his land as a water supply, though Abel had refused me the same privilege for ten years, Frank said he wanted the advice of a county agent in developing the glebeland of the Fairview Meeting House; and one day he drove into my front yard with a professor of the agriculture college, a man who held himself out as a Department Expert. This man was Tom Whelpley.

Tom is a Tennessee hill-billy, who walked I don't know how many miles when he was fifteen to a place where they teach the mountain girls and boys in what they call a college—but the first thing they taught Tom was the alphabet. He worked his way through this "college," and after he had learned enough knocked off from time to time and taught school. He was a success in the country schools; but when he tried tc lift himself "higher" in the teaching profession by city work he fell down. He didn't seem to fit into the angles of the pavements. He was long and weedy to

look at; and you might spend a hundred dollars on sprucing him up, and he would still look weather-beaten, like a cowboy masquerading as a drug clerk.

He tells me that he was mightily downcast when the city superintendent suggested that he wasn't temperamentally adapted to teaching; because teaching was the only thing he wanted to do. That's one advantage they have in school work down south—teaching apparently is there still considered a man's work. Tom believed it to be a man's work; and he counted himself, in spite of his troubles with city conditions, the proper man to do it. Doctor Knapp was just opening up his demonstration work in the South; and one of the pioneer demonstrators drifted into Tom's neighborhood, and filled Tom with the idea that here was a new and different sort of teaching—teaching farmers how to farm. So Tom, in the perfect independence of pennilessness, made his way to our state agricultural college, which he chose because our Corn-Belt colleges had a high reputation in the South. Not being able to make as much money in Corn-Belt rural school-teaching as he could as a farm hand, he supported himself largely by farm work, all the time applying the science he got in the college to the practise of the farm —in thought, at least. Of course no good farmer would allow him to carry it much further than the thought stage. And now, that Tom had graduated from the agricultural college with some gray in his hair, this professor and our minister were trying to saw him off on us as a county agent at a salary of

eighteen hundred a year, half of which we farmers of the county were expected to pay. And of all men to start such a subscription paper, they had Abel Bohn, who still believed in footwashing as a means of grace in church!

Well, of course, we weren't going to fall very suddenly for anything like that. We hadn't thought it out. We told Wiggins and the professor and Tom Whelpley that we relied on experience as our guide in farming; and didn't take much stock in newfangled ideas.

"I see you have a patch of rape over there," remarked Tom. "Why do you grow rape?"

"Best hog pasture I can grow," I replied.

"I notice that Mr. Beebe has a patch of alfalfa that looks sort of yellow and spindling," he went on. "I wonder what's the cause of that."

"It lacks inoculation," I answered. "Wilson and I dug up I guess twenty crowns of it the other day, and didn't find a nodule on a single root."

"Do you know," said Tom, "that the first rape sowed in this country was introduced by the experimenters of the state college not over fifteen years ago, and that you wouldn't have known about it if you had waited to be taught by what you call experience?"

I didn't answer, not having anything appropriate to say.

"And did you find out about inoculating alfalfa, and the nodules on the roots by experience?" he went on. "As a matter of fact, when you use such words as

'nodules,' 'inoculation,' and 'bacteria'—and, so far as that's concerned, the word 'crown,' too—you're talking about things you've read about. Twenty years ago you wouldn't have known what the word meant."

"I didn't mention 'bacteria,'" I snapped back.

"No," said Tom, "but you would in a minute; and in half a day you'd be talking about humus and ensilage, and possibly azotobacter. The farmer ought to be ashamed of being the only man who is ashamed of reading about his work—and he has more to read about than the doctor or the lawyer."

They drove off rather sore because the county agent project for our county was dead. After they got over to the new parsonage that we had just built for Frank and Daisy, they discussed the prospects over their dinner.

"We'll put it over yet," Frank said—or something to that broad, general effect. "These people of mine are pretty thick with moss; but I always get them for anything I want."

"And in the meantime," said Tom, "I've got to get a job. I'm broke. Who wants a hired man around here?"

"I do," said Frank. "I can give you three months' work on this little farm of mine, and if my work happens to play out, there's always a job somewhere hereabouts."

One reason why Frank fell down on this county agent drive was that he had just put through his scheme for a consolidated rural school; and we had to

take him down a peg just on general principles, or give up completely mastered. Daisy was expecting to have a baby; and Frank would have been glad to live in the tar-paper covered tent for ten years, as he did for the first eighteen months of his pastorate, if he could thereby have helped along the establishment of a good graded, consolidated rural school for the coming prodigy. We fixed the gentleman on his martyrdom scheme by building him a cracking good parsonage on the corner of the fifteen acres of swamp glebeland, which by this time he had drained as dry as a garden and was running in celery and other truck, as well as staple crops; and as for the school project, he had acquired so much influence in the adjoining districts of Pleasant Valley, Hickory Grove, Grant Center, Wheeler's Crossroads and Indian Ridge that he could have voted a township vaudeville palace on us if he had wanted to, I guess, let alone a consolidated rural school with a provision for the transportation of the pupils. So we whirled in with a whoop and boosted for the new school, claiming that we had been for it all the time—which as a matter of fact some of us had been. And at this Whelpley crisis the new building was nearing completion, and we were pleased as Punch at having it in the Fairview District and skinning the Indian Ridge folks out of it. We were entitled to it, anyhow, and putting it within a furlong or so of the Fairview Meeting House was a good move in the direction of making that place a sort of center. Abel Bohn and I have laid off a few acre lots along the

road, and I sold two yesterday to John Ackerman, who expects to return to Fairview after having retired. And I could sell a couple to Herman Lutz, too, who is dead tired of the life of a retired farmer, but Abel says he saw Herman first, and I think I'll let Abel have him. I just mention these things to show that if you have the right sort of neighborhood facilities, and neighborhood life, a man who wants to live an easier life in his old age can retire in the country and keep his eye on the farm while his son or tenant runs it. It will keep the country life alive, and give us nice little hamlets about the churches and schoolhouses and make for better tenancy and less of it, and give some of us a chance to sell some acre lots.

Tom Whelpley used to moon about at night in the unfinished schoolhouse. None of us then knew that he had ever been a school-teacher; but the directors were impressed with certain suggestions he made as to the plans for the building. On Sundays he used to get a gang of boys together and scout the country over hunting for insect pests in the grain and fruit and making lists of the birds they saw. I went with him one day, and they identified fifty-four different kinds of birds observed on that trip. The only weapon was an opera glass and a little camera which Tom carried. One day he laid off work and showed some girls how to can corn—it seems that he had made some sort of study of the trick of home canning, and knew some things which the women hadn't learned. He and Frank and Daisy were as thick as thieves; and if they

hadn't been a new sort of bird to the rest of us we would have understood at once that they were up to something. As it was we thought it was only their eccentricities, and peacefully went to sleep at the switch.

I own I thought it looked like politics when Tom Whelpley hooked up with Adolph Tulp, brother of Henry Tulp, a member of the board of directors from over in Pleasant Valley, at the other end of the new consolidated district. Adolph had drifted into the neighborhood, drunk and sick and down and out six months before; and was now the chief problem of Henry's folks. He was a sort of universal genius, but specialized in booze. He talked broken German-American and when he was sober was a fellow one liked to talk with. He had been a sailor, a soldier, a carpenter, and was a good horse-shoer—learned that in the German army; but his chief amusement was talking against the Imperial German government and the making of pretty little things of iron, either with a lathe or a hammer. The minister's people took him in one night when he was wallowing around in the churchyard; and I understand was that bad with the horrors that he tried to kill himself. He was a poor miserable creature, and just the sort of case Daisy was prone to take on for practise in the art of nursing, which she studied before she married Frank; and Frank himself, in spite of the fact that he devoted himself to practical farming more than to theology, had great faith in the power of kindness and prayer and religious exaltation

to set the broken bones of the spirit and reduce dislocations in the human intellect. We supposed that all Adolph could possibly be was a case in their spiritual hospital, and met the situation by adding a little to the preacher's salary to cover these expenses, and the increased family expenses and one thing and another. He was earning the increase all right. Nobody gets anything out of us except on a business basis.

But when Tom Whelpley began using the new schoolhouse before it was finished as a meeting place for the boys of the neighborhood, and had this Adolph Tulp teaching them how to tie and splice ropes, and other useful tricks, I saw that he was getting pretty solid with Henry Tulp. Tom and the minister and Adolph set up a forge and anvil in a shed the contractors had put up for construction work on the school grounds, and Adolph began teaching the boys to make clevises, sharpen plowshares, temper iron, set tires on the farm-wagons, set shoes on horses, repair machinery generally, and make things of wrought iron that were as pretty as if they had been stamped out by machinery. They are said by some to be even more artistic. Young John Whipple, the son of the other school director, Eph Whipple, of Indian Ridge, made a wrought-iron lantern for the Whipple porch that was highly spoken of at the county fair, where it was exhibited—and Tom Whelpley was solid with Whipple, of course.

Do you see where all this led to? When Frank Wiggins came to me and suggested that Tom Whelpley was the man to be at the head of our new consolidated

school, I said, to give myself time to think, "I wonder if he could get a certificate."

"He's got a state certificate in Tennessee," said he, "and the county superintendent says he will give him a certificate on his credentials."

I'm far better than a green hand at a political situation, and our public school matters are and always must be political—in the best sense, or the worst sense, or at any rate some sense of the word. I thought of Eph Whipple—and I knew he was stuck on Tom Whelpley because of Johnnie's wrought-iron lantern, and the fact that Tom was making a whole lot better boy of Johnnie. I thought of Henry Tulp, the second member of the board, and I knew he'd bet on Tom's ability to do anything under the sun after what he had accomplished in making Adolph Tulp over into what seemed to be a man. Then I thought of myself, and I wondered why I was not strong for Tom as our schoolmaster—because I liked the fellow even then. I looked at the Reverend Frank Wiggins—and I knew.

"Frank," said I, "you've got me surrounded; and I'm going to surrender. I'll vote for Whelpley; but I think it's a mistake."

"Why?" he asked.

"Because," said I, "it will put a man in the school who will just completely blanket, and eclipse, and lay over the work of the church. I'm opposed to him, because I'm for you."

He looked at me in a kind of wonder, with some tenderness mixed in.

"Why, Uncle Abner," said he, "I'm surprised at you!"

"I don't care if you are!" said I. "Tom Whelpley is the same sort of person that you are—only he's a darned sight smarter, I believe; and he knows all you have learned about the life of the people, and a good deal that you never will know. He's a natural rube, and you have acquired only the rube surface. He'll beat you at your own game, and make the school the whole thing. There ain't room in this community for two men like you to work on the same job. I'm proud of our meeting house, and the work you and Daisy have been doing. It's given the neighborhood a good name, not only hereabouts, but all over the country. I don't want to see you undermined—so there!"

Well, he just sat down and made me ashamed of myself. The school, he said, was the thing which was at the bottom of everything. We had built up our church first, but that was a local accident. We had really begun with the second thing first. In any neighborhood, he urged, in which there is a full and abounding rural life, there will be a chance for the right kind of church so long as religion is the common heritage of all human souls; "And," said he, "if that isn't true I have made a mistake in my profession! Do you think," he went on, "that I regard the agricultural work we have been doing in the church as the best thing we might have done? Not for a minute. We have done it because it needed to be done. We shall always make this church a rural church, run by farmers, min-

istered unto by a farmer, smelling of the soil; because it can never be a success unless it is tied to the life of every member by the chords of every-day association; but if I can get Tom Whelpley into the schools, he will take off my hands many things that I have done rather badly, and he will do them well. I need to do other things. Adolph Tulp is not the only person in this community who needs help in matters of the mind and soul. The school is in its nature inclusive. The church is in its nature exclusive. It can not take in all the people. Think of the many who have conscientious scruples against fellowship with the Fairview Meeting House —and there is no possible religious organization which could be broader than we are. Any church organization is likely to follow the way taken by the old Winebrennerian congregation which laid the corner-stone of our building sixty years ago. But the school is a part of the Republic. As long as the nation lasts it will exist. Our church must be supported by the voluntary subscriptions of the people. But the school is supported by taxes. If this mania for moving to town keeps up, and many more farms drift into the hands of year-by-year tenants, our church must, before many years, go the way of thousands of other rural churches. But the school, thank God! will be supported by taxes on the very farms our Fairview landowners have deserted, and out of the school may be built up a democracy which will decree that no man may own land unless he works it!"

This, of course, was rot; but I didn't think at that

moment of the arguments against it. I was confronted by a condition, anyhow, and not a theory; and we elected Tom Whelpley Principal of the Fairview Consolidated School—and that's how he came to be the Neighborhood Hired Man.

To any one who wants to know what Tom Whelpley has done in the ruralization of the Fairview school system, and the giving of life to the society of our countryside, which that eastern saphead calls "socialization," we are now able to assume high and mighty airs. We may say grandly, "Search the scriptures!" Or we may adopt the policy of old Colonel Asprey, of our county town, who was a real Colonel in the Civil War, and did great service on the stricken field on many a hot occasion. Now he follows the humble, if noisy, vocation of the auctioneer. One day a bystander asked, "How did you get your title, Colonel? On the Governor's staff?" The Colonel bayonetted him with a long, cold glare, and said calmly, "You supremely qualified ignorant scum of the earth! Read the history of your country!" So if we desire to be mean, when any one asks us what Tom Whelpley has done, we refer to magazine articles and bulletins, issued by our state government, and by the federal government at Washington, if you please! The time will come, I suppose, when such work will attract no more attention than a good twine binder in operation. But now, the spectacle of anything like the successful application of common sense and constructive ability in rural life in America is nothing less than a marvel.

I often tell Tom that he started in at the right time. Ten years from now it will take an all-fired smart man to get as much limelight as he is getting in the same line of business.

In view of the fact that all that can be put in print about it is available to any one who will send to a paternal government for it, I shall only shadow forth as well as I can the things that aren't in print, and tell the beginnings of it. Tom had the school pretty well organized before he was elected. All he had to do was to perfect, and as the war despatches say, "consolidate the ground already occupied." He had Adolph Tulp on his hands, and to have abandoned him would have incited a riot among the boys, who liked Adolph to the last kid, because Adolph hates the kaiser, and can do stunts—and would probably have driven Adolph back to drink and despair. So Tom and Adolph organized the manual training class into a construction brigade, and built a blacksmith shop on the corner of the lot with lumber bought with money made at a series of entertainments in the auditorium of the schoolhouse.

Here Adolph was installed as teacher of the metal-working end of the manual training course. Most of the blacksmithing of the district is done there now; and of this work, the boys perform the lion's share of the labor, and get credits in their course of study. Adolph is allowed to take pay for what he does aside from the instructional work, and is making a nice living out of it and his small salary; but he insists on regarding himself as a professional man, and not an

artisan. He is a teacher, and proud of it—and that shows—I hate to write it—that the Germans have some advantage of us, too, in regarding teaching as a man's work.

Adolph also is Tom's assistant in the wood-working department, which is accommodated in the basement of the schoolhouse. There isn't much that Adolph can't do, now. He learns faster than any boy, and he carries his acquirements from school year to school year. He plays the French horn, and is the head of the school orchestra. He drills a company of Boy Scouts. He and the boys plan about every building that goes up in the district. They make architectural and mechanical drawings. They construct models. And all this is done in such ways that the boys get a whole lot of arithmetic and what we used to call natural philosophy, too. Everything is educational first and useful afterward—though Tom says there is no valid distinction between the useful and the educational.

A thing happened just yesterday which shows how things are going here. My little granddaughter brought me her "Field and Garden Book," and insisted on my looking at it. It is a pretty little book, covered in red, and bound with a silk cord. On the first page is a notice "To the Club Members" which reads thus: "This book when complete will be the record of your garden club work. Write in it only with ink, and keep it clean and correct. You will be asked to show it every time you are visited. Next fall when you have completed your garden club work, and

this record, you will be asked to turn it in as proof of your work. No credit will be granted unless the record is complete.—Tom Whelpley, Principal." On the next page was a charming photograph of little Marian, my grandchild, standing in her garden. On the next was a series of ten items to be filled out "as you get the information required." From this I was delighted to learn that (1) her name is Marian Dunham, (2) she belongs to the Fairview Consolidated School, (3) it was the season of 1915, (4) the size of the plot was 16 square yards, or 2 rods by 8 rods; (5) the crops were radishes, sweet corn, peas, lettuce, and celery—by which I knew she had rented the ground of Frank Wiggins so as to be near Daisy's baby; (6) her total income was $15.34—which I didn't believe until I looked over her accounts; (7) the total cost of rent, fertilizer, seed, hired labor, and so forth was $2.25; leaving her a total profit of (8) $13.09; signed and certified to by (9) Maude Ackerman, Teacher. (Maude is one of the Ackerman girls who thought they had to teach in the city in order to be doing really respectable school work, but was tempted out into the new schoolhouse by Tom Whelpley's Tennessee drawl. This accounts for John Ackerman's buying those lots of me. He's going to build there next spring and move back.)

Item (10) in Marian's book is under the head of "Disposal of Net Proceeds." Under this I was informed that she had paid out $3.09 for various frivolities, a large part of which was for materials for a hat. The hat itself was designed and made in school in Miss

Falk's domestic economy class; and Marian received credits on her school work for making the hat. Following this are two pages for "itemized expenses and itemized receipts," and then a note, which is a sort of preface to "The Story of My Garden Plot." This note enjoins upon Marian the propriety of writing the story in diary form, giving first the date and then the event. This utilizes the deep and abiding instinctive passion of girls to keep diaries. The instruction is given to use ink and keep the story neat. "This story must include how and from whom you obtained your land, date of measuring the plot, dimensions, and who helped you to measure it; fertilization, plowing and harrowing, planting, progress of crops and incidentals; to whom, when and in what amounts the crop was disposed of, and the sums received for it; and again 'Disposal of Proceeds.'" Marian was also required to keep a record of visits, on pages provided for that purpose, with the visitor's signatures; and this interesting little volume closed with a certificate as to the correctness of the record, signed by Marian's mother as parent, and by Frank Wiggins as "Country Life Director." There is also a "recommendation of achievement" authorizing the powers that be to grant Marian a certain number of units of achievement on the merits of the report.

Now, this may not be very thrilling to you, but to Marian it was. Bear in mind that Marian is only one of a large number of girls and boys organized in this "Field and Garden Club," under the supervision of

teachers and helpers as Country Life Directors. Remember, too, that other children were in poultry clubs, others in corn clubs, others in pig clubs, others in canning clubs, and that we have connected with the school one society composed of just folks, regardless of age, called the Fairview Society for the Study of Insect Life, which specialized last year in chinch-bugs, white grubs, and the Hessian fly; and a similar society for the study of economic botany, which has taken up pedigreed seeds.

Each member of these school clubs has a sign-board, made by the boys of the school, according to a standard design produced by Adolph Tulp. Credits were given in the manual training course for making the signs. Marian's sign reads, "Member Fairview School and Garden Club," and is carefully placed so as to be visible from the road.

Now, when I went to school it took a boy like Wilfred Raymond to be really crazy about school work. The rest of us hated it. We really had to be clubbed into going, and coerced into staying. Any self-respecting boy admired the fellow who had the nerve to play hooky and take a licking for it; but in Tom Whelpley's school the reading, writing, arithmetic, history and all the rest of it is just a by-product of projects in which the children are so interested that they dream of them nights. The garden club work and the other things I have mentioned are only a small part of it. There is a whole list of school-home projects. They have achievement emblems which take the place of the

Greek letter buttons worn in colleges. They have credit-awarding exercises held in the auditorium. And once in a while we have a moving-picture show, or a concert; and twice in a while we have feasts cooked by the domestic economy classes (credits given, of course) and served by another squad, also receiving credits. The children are given school credits for washing dishes, taking care of the baby, making beds, feeding live stock, working in the garden, and other things which they do for their parents.

Hans Larsen objected to his children's going into club work, because, he said, he needed their work himself. Now he says they have not only carried on their own work and made enough money so that they put on the air of business men and are learning what money in the bank means, but they have done more helpful work for their parents and done it more cheerfully than ever before. Hans has coined an aphorism which I think is worth preserving. It is: "Cheerfulness bane better for work dan stoutness."

We have a lot of what Tom calls "school-home projects." One of these relates to business; and a young person must make a net profit of at least fifty dollars a year to get credit in this. There are Cooking and Sewing School-Home Projects, Poultry School-Home Projects, Music School-Home Projects, and I don't know but more by this time; for when a craze like this strikes a neighborhood, they almost always overdo it.

After looking this over my wife insists that it gives a wholly wrong impression of the change in our neigh-

borhood life brought about by the ruralized rural school and the truly rural country church.

"It sounds sordid," says she. "It sounds as if all we were working for is the almighty dollar. It doesn't say a word about the newer and sweeter spirit in the air, and the new sense of neighborship, and the ties which have been woven between the older settlers' families and the new people, and especially the tenant farmers. It doesn't say anything about the better leases the landlords are giving their tenants, and the better practises which the tenants have begun to adopt on their side. And it never hints at our growing culture."

Well, I can't tell everything at once, can I? And then there are those bulletins which you haven't read yet, if you are interested. Moreover, I believe the first duty of man is to make a living; and the practical things of life are what appeal to me most. It's different with the women. As a matter of fact, though, I suppose Adolph Tulp is the most typical transcendentalist in our community, and he was certainly not an ornament to society when Tom, and Frank Wiggins, took him up and made him a member of the faculty of the school. Adolph made a speech the other evening when we staged a little play written by Wilson Beebe's second boy, called *An American Peasant,* and portraying the evils of farm tenantry in the Fairview neighborhood.

"When I came to America," said Adolph, "I thought that the polling place, and the election was where the

soul of America would be found. And soon I made up my mind that America had no soul, and that democracy and liberty and equality were just words. But here in these social center activities of the Fairview School, I have found the soul of American democracy. This will be to America what the Greek Church is to Russia, what the Empire should be to Germany, but isn't, what the race is to Japan, what the family is to China, what the old gods are to the Hindu. We are here building the temple in which America shall house the Ark of her Covenant—the whole people going to school to each other!"

This seems a good deal like sentimentalism to me. There's enough in the study of good farming and all it implies to make up an education good enough for anybody's children. In fact, four boys and two girls are driving out from town every day this very year to attend the Fairview School, because the folks in the city are finding out that we give a better schooling for any kid anywhere than they can give in town—and they pay tuition to the district for the privilege. After all, money is what talks.

There are a few things which tell of what our school gives in the way of intellectual inspiration which may be convincing to those who can not see that what we have acquired is more abundant life, and when you get life, it will grow in every direction and express itself in every way in spite of you. Take that play written by young Morton Beebe. We liked it, because it deals with our own life. Of course we never had the nerve

to think that there was anything in it worth the attention of college people; but Tom Whelpley has had invitations to speak on the Western Movement in Rural Drama before college societies in Pittsburgh, Chicago and New York. Other schools which happen to be filled with their own proper life are doing similar things—a lot of farmers in North Dakota and Minnesota are crazy about farm plays. One fellow in New York wrote Tom that he greeted these as possible beginnings of a real drama—"as significant," said he, "as *Ralph Roister Doister,* or *Gammer Gurton's Needle*"—whatever they may be.

And then there is the case of Sylvia Wheeler, of Wheeler's Crossroads. She'll write a versified sort of ritual for one of our little pageants, or processions, like the ones we have at a colt fair or flower jamboree, on three days' notice at any time. But the most extreme case is that of Eddie Blair, a fifteen-year-old boy who never was worth much until Tom came among us. I went to visit the school one day to give the animal husbandry class a talk on Maintenance Rations for Brood Sows—half the teaching in that blamed school is done by the men and women of the district—and I saw on Eddie's desk a lot of funny-looking diagrams with angles and curves, more of which he was drawing. "What's this?" said I. He blushed and squirmed as a kid will; but Tom explained that Eddie was calculating some astronomical phenomenon. "I can't explain it fully," said Tom, "because it runs too deep into mathematics for me. That boy will one of

these days be a great mathematician, or scientist, or engineer."

Now I've looked back over the history of the district for forty years, and under our old system of "culture," when we were raising our boys to be dentists and doctors and lawyers and presidents of the United States, and our girls to be the wives of professional men and merchants, I could think of only one pupil who had shown as much ability in things generally thought to be "cultural" as half a dozen we have now. That one was Doctor Raymond, Daisy Wiggins' father. And he wasn't half as smart as Eddie Blair or Sylvia Wheeler, or Morton Beebe.

"Undoubtedly," says the Reverend Frank Wiggins, "the new zest of life which our vocational teaching is giving our people is making them better acquainted with Shakespeare and Emerson than they would have been if we had put courses in Emerson and Shakespeare in the course of study. Probably we shall develop poets, painters, dramatists, scientists, engineers, chemists and novelists from our school in time, which the world would never have known if we hadn't begun to correlate our school and neighborhood life with the vocation we all have to follow."

"Sculptors, too," said Adolph Tulp, who has one or two engaged in modeling in clay, and making iron flowers.

Personally, though, I'm satisfied if we can do better farming, and not be grouchy about it all the time. That's what I see in the thing—the abolition of the

Rural Grouch. It's about cured me, I confess, and I had it in a malignant form only as far back as when they tried to induct Tom Whelpley as county agent. We're all glad now that they failed. He is worth more where he is.

## CHAPTER VI

### AN ADVENTURE IN BACKTOTHELANDIA

WE people of the Fairview District are sometimes accused of conceit on account of the so-called socialization of our neighborhood. I claim that there is no such thing as a taint of Socialism in it. My contention is that we have carried right through to its logical conclusion, on a few lines, the sort of thing which my New England ancestors laid the foundation for in the free school and the town meeting.

If John Endicott, for instance, were running a Corn-Belt community in 1916, he would insist on a consolidated rural school with an assembly hall for free discussion of everything under the sun, moving pictures, lectures, eating and drinking, and music. And if old John knew the importance to a farming people of a knowledge of soils, crops, insects, bacteria, fungi, sprays, rotations, and community breeding, buying and marketing, he would be for all our "new things," including the county agent, the county short course, the ruralized rural school, the boys' and girls' clubs and all the rest of it, including, I believe, our local plays and pageants, and the baseball, track meets, and dancing. Maybe not the dancing—but I believe he'd be for that. I'm sure he'd be for the Fairview Meeting House, and

the Reverend Frank Wiggins and Daisy, his wife. If he weren't for most of this program he'd be in a mighty insignificant minority. For those are the things of which we are accused, with some small reason, maybe, of being conceitedly proud.

We pride ourselves on having the answer to almost any rural-life problem. By two problems, however, we are frankly stumped. One of these is the increasing price of land which is making it harder and harder all the time for any one to start in farming. The other is the back-to-the-lander. We know the back-to-the-lander of old. We had him in the early days of the country's settlement—especially in the seventies, when lots of people came from the cities to the prairies, green as grass and chock-full of misinformation, with the idea that any one knew enough to farm; but the most hopeless part of the back-to-the-lander is the kind we have now.

The piffle in the magazines and newspapers about miracles of success in farming, and fairy stories of agriculture send men from the cities to the land in a frame of mind far more unfavorable to success than we found in the hazy ignorance or bumptious optimism of those sent out by Horace Greeley's "Go west, young man." They now come with false science. They are the boys who have read that when the sides of Mother Earth are tickled with a hoe she breaks out into a regular ha-ha of harvest, the chaps who when you tell them that farming is done on a mighty close margin, speak patronizingly of intensive cultivation and of

making two blades of grass grow where none ever grew before, of the application of factory system to farming, and of the new science of Efficiency as applied to Agriculture. These are hopeless, to my mind, and we give them up. If they have money we sell them land, and wait patiently to see them fail—"like vultures," as one of them said, "watching for the lost traveler to fall that they may devour him." But suppose the traveler insists on being devoured, and won't take "no" for an answer? How about that?

It seems to me that whenever one of these agricultural revolutionists takes it into his head along with other truck in it, to go out and show us rubes how to farm, he strikes a bee-line for our neck of the woods to get advice; for the farm papers which most of them read for a year or so before they start have instilled into their brains the feeling that they ought to take advice before actually beginning the careers by which they will prove that because Texas is as large as the German Empire, which supports seventy millions of people, the United States could easily maintain three times the whole population of the globe. So he thinks he will take fifteen or twenty minutes off to advise with a few men like me, and find out all we know. The man they visit first is usually Tom Whelpley, Principal of the Fairview Consolidated Rural School, and Neighborhood Man-of-all-Work. He is the best advertised man we have. The papers write him up often. And it admonishes me of the flight of time while we have been building up our community or-

ganization to remember how long ago it was when Tom came to me with Wilberforce Fogg and an expression of anxiety.

"Mr. Dunham," said he, "this is Mr. Fogg, of Chicago, of whom I spoke to you."

"I'm glad to meet you, Mr. Fogg," said I. "You're the gentleman, I believe, who thinks he can get rich on eggs by keeping one hen per square foot, aren't you?"

"No," he said, "I haven't studied poultry."

"Then," I went on, "maybe you're the person who sees a fortune in sprouting rhubarb in the cellar for winter consumption, or in horseradish, or ginseng, or Belgian hares, or portulaca seed. Something like that, I'm sure."

"No," said he, and he blushed a little as he said it, "—er, that is, I have thought a combination of mushrooms and rhubarb might add to profits; but my ambition is to develop a few acres of land to the point of making me a good income in dairying. I say a few acres, because by taking less land one saves on investment, and by intensive cultivation one may make every square yard of land work harder and produce more. The state of Texas—"

"Yes," said I, "I know about the state of Texas. It is as large as the German Empire—and the rest of it."

"Don't you believe in intensive cultivation?" asked he, much in the same tone as that used by teachers when they ask if two and two don't make four.

"I don't know anything about it," said I; "extensive

cultivation is hard enough for me; since I can begin to remember, though, everything's been tried about here once or twice. I don't know of any farming which is succeeding worth a darn that is more intensive than mine."

"Well," said he, "Professor King shows that the Chinese system of intensive agriculture supports a population in some places of over three thousand to the square mile, or nearly five persons to the acre."

"Does King say that?" I asked of Tom.

"Yes," replied Tom, "I believe he does, but see how they live. And the real test is not how many live to the square mile, but how they live."

"And how many die to the square mile?" I suggested.

"That's so," asserted Fogg.

"And it's generally overlooked," said Tom. "The population of China is stationary, though the birth-rate is very high. What keeps it stationary? Starvation! Down in the Alabama woods along the sandy barrens of the Gulf shore, where I once worked in a turpentine camp, there is a sparse population of razor-back hogs. They don't seem to increase in numbers though they are very prolific—in that way resembling the Chinese. I found that a mother pig with a litter of ten would lose them at the rate of about one a day until the number came down to what she could nourish—about two pigs. Most Chinese babies die. They have to. Too many people being forced to live on the rich lands of

China produce the same result as too few acorns on the sandy barrens of Alabama."

"Gosh!" said I—I was thinking of the poor babies. "Before we reach that point, I hope the sea overwhelms us."

"But," said Wilberforce Fogg, quite unconvinced, "surely such men as Prince Kropotkin know what they are talking about when they speak of the almost unlimited capacity of the earth to produce food and shelter and clothing. And Kropotkin says—"

"How much farming has he ever done in the Corn Belt?" I asked. "In the Corn Belt, farming is a question of labor. We sell on a market created by machine-made crops. Intensive farming means hand-made crops. Where food is scarce and flesh and blood are cheap, the hand process of making crops is cheaper than machine processes, I suppose. It pays better in Hong-Kong, I am told, to drive spiles by hand than to use a steam spile-driver. But if you try raising corn by the Chinese method in the Mississippi Valley, you'll go broke, thank God, just as surely as you would if you tried driving spiles according to their ways. That's all there is to this business of intensive farming—and there ain't any use of talking with me any further about it."

"I am determined," said Wilberforce Fogg, "to get out of the soot and grime and slavery of the city. I am determined to go back to the land. Nobody can dissuade me!"

He said this with his voice rising to a sort of wail, slightly broken at the close, as if with emotion; and as I looked into his eyes when he ceased speaking, they seemed to me to be moist with tears.

"Well," said I, "who in thunder is trying to dissuade you? Go your length—and if there's anything I can do to grease the ways, command me."

"I don't want you to think, Mr. Fogg," broke in Tom Whelpley, "that I fully agree with Uncle Abner on the subject of intensive farming. A great many absurdities have been said and written about it; but we don't yet know the degree of intensification which will bring us to the loss line. That's one of the things we hope to work out in the Fairview Rural School within ten years. All we know now is that under our conditions, the larger farms pay best as farming is done; but once in a while a small farm is found that pays well. Take such cases as Arnold Martin, of Nebraska, and many others. What we need is a close and coordinated study of every small farm in the United States which pays well, so as to learn why they do so. The time is coming when the large farms will have to be divided, or our farming people separated into a permanent class of landed aristocrats, and another permanent class of landless peasants."

"And the way it looks to me now," I put in, "the development will be in the direction of landowners and casual laborers—tramps. That don't look very good for the country!"

"Well," said Wilberforce, "I shall never be able to

buy a big farm. I'm not a big man. I'm small fry in the city, and I'll be small fry in the country, I suppose, but I'm going back to the land!"

"How much money have you?" asked Tom.

"About eight hundred dollars," replied Fogg.

"Lucky it isn't more!" said I. "If you had eight thousand you'd lose it, and your credit would be better. So you'd go broke owing more. What family have you?"

"I'm single," said he, "and have no one dependent upon me; but—"

He stopped and blushed. In fact, one thing I liked about the chap was his blushing. I've seen fools that blushed easily, but never a bad man. This fellow Fogg seemed to be a good sort of lunatic, after all.

"Well," said I, "spit it out. You've got a girl. That's a very important factor in a farmer's life. Tell me about her. If she isn't the right sort, you may as well give up this back-to-the-landing first as last."

"Well," said he, as a matter of course, "she's the most splendid girl in the world. I'm foreman in a box factory, getting a hundred dollars a month. She's cashier in a laundry at ten a week. She has a hundred dollars or so saved up, but ten a week don't go far in Chicago. I wish you could see her, Mr. Dunham!"

"Does she know anything about farm life?" asked Tom Whelpley.

"Not a thing," answered Fogg, "but she's stuck on it. She reads a great deal, and she likes horses and cows and birds and flowers and green fields and new

mown hay. And she's a good housekeeper. You ought to taste the fudge she makes!"

Now it was perfectly clear that these were two mature young fools—for neither of them was very young—who were carried away by the deluge of piffle about Backtothelandia which floods the press. While Fogg was out in the field seeing how a haystacker works, Tom and I discussed him, and I expressed the above opinion.

"He'll fail as sure as eggs is eggs," I insisted.

"I think so, too," said Tom; "but how can we keep him from making the fatal mistake? I think he'll take my advice. I brought him over here to let you size him up so as to get your help. If he only knew a little something about farming, so he could understand our reasoning, it would be easier. If he had only worked as a farm hand for a few years, we could—"

"Why, if he had done that," said I, "he'd make good as a farmer; and all that stuff he has read might some of it do him some good. Why not advise him right—tell him to start in as a farm hand until he learns the—the—"

"Technique?" suggested Tom.

"I think that must be it," I said. "I want him to know how much backache there is in a farmer's dollar, and how many chances in his year; how to pitch manure without getting sick of his job, and how to conduct a lying-in hospital for hogs without having his stomach turned. Anyhow, he can do that without

losing anything more than his job. He can save that little wad of money. Bring him in, and I'll advise him! And if I'm in wrong, you can reverse me."

Wilberforce Fogg stood before us after he came in from the hayfield a good deal in the attitude of a hired man charged with designs on the melon-patch.

"Maybe you'd better tell Mr. Dunham," said Tom Whelpley, "something about your plans for getting back to the land. Just how do you plan to go about it?"

"Well," said he, "I—that is, we planned to look around and find a little farm which we could buy on time, making our first payment with my eight hundred dollars. My mother has a little money, but I won't take any of that. It's too small a fortune anyhow to support her, and she is living on the principal. I hope to God she'll live long enough to live it all up; and that I can have the privilege of supporting her for a long time after it's all gone—so you see I haven't any expectations. I must paddle my own canoe. I shall have to start on the eight hundred; and we haven't a doubt we can make a go of it. I didn't tell you, did I, that the doctors tell me that I must get into the open?"

"No," said Tom. "Why didn't you say that in the first place?"

"Because," replied he, "that isn't the real reason. We want to get out into the country—Millie and I."

"Well now, son," said I, "let me tell you that the plan you've laid is all wrong. You want to learn farming. Learn it at some one else's expense. You want to

make a living. Make it by your work at the rudiments of farming with some one else to furnish the capital, and do the planning. How much would you be satisfied to make clear on your first year's work on this little farm you're planning to buy?"

"Well," said he, "of course, I—we should make mistakes. I have felt that if we could barely live the first year we should be doing pretty well—don't you think so?"

"Would you be satisfied if you cleared three hundred dollars above your board?"

"I certainly should," cried Wilberforce. "Show me how, and lead me to it!"

"Hire out as a farm hand at twenty-five dollars a month. If you want to be a dairyman, hire out on a dairy farm. Leave the eight hundred dollars in the bank, and put twenty-five more with it every month. Learn the habits, tricks, and the language of cows. Learn to milk, keep a score sheet, and do individual feeding with a balanced ration. Study the dairy proposition from every angle. Take a year, two years, years enough to absorb all the thousand and one little bits of knowledge that never get into the books or papers. Learn on other people's cows, other people's feeds, other people's capital. Make the dairy business pay you for learning it. Play safe, young man, play safe. The only way to do this is to go to work at the farming business at the bottom as a hired man. Every back-to-the-lander ought to be obliged by law to do it. It would make intelligent and interested hired men

more plentiful for us farmers, and it would save a lot of fools from making themselves ridiculous and going broke."

I wonder just how many people there are in the cities and towns who are bitten by the bug of Backtothelandia. Thousands and thousands, of course, and probably millions. Otherwise the daily papers and city people's magazines would not print so much about getting back to the land. Otherwise every actor and actress wouldn't say to the papers that his or her chief ambition is to retire to a little farm or ranch. Otherwise every wrestler, pugilist, and baseball player wouldn't buy a farm with the first big purse won or saved. After all, we are still an agricultural people. To be sure, only about a third of us live in the country, but of the other two-thirds a goodly number have moved in from the farms, were farmers in Europe, or are descended from the old American stock which was as purely agricultural as the Russian people only a generation or so ago. Figuratively, we are a nation of rustics treading the pavements with the plowman's shamble and dried mud on our brogans. Why, down at the stone-crusher along the track back of Abel Bohn's there is always a gang of fifty to a hundred Italians at work, and every one of them, so far as I can discover, lived on a farm in Italy. The same thing is true of the Hunkies in the section crews.

Now in a people so derived, there must be a powerful instinct impelling people back to the farms. It is a racial reversion to type. "You may sigh, you may cry,

you may moan, you may groan; but you can't do a thing with what's bred in the bone." Wilberforce Fogg is a type of the sort of tadpole with which our cities are filled, who naturally tend to shed their city tails and get out on land as rural frogs. His case, therefore, is very important. It is a great national problem.

Tom Whelpley and I were not conscious that when he took hold of Wilberforce's situation as a question of sociological engineering we were grappling with the Great American Riddle, which is guessing the true route to Backtothelandia. This is the sociological Northwest Passage, the voyage which leads through latitudes which cause ice to form on the outsides of most of the back-to-the-landers' boots, the Baffin's Bays and Davis Straits of the ocean of American industrial discontent.

I personally don't believe in this doctrine of back-to-the-land, for in my opinion there are enough people on the land now. I think the city people should stay in the cities, and the country people on the farms, where they both know what to do; but I found out long ago that the nation is not going to consult me. Therefore, I contend, if we are always, or for a considerable length of time, going to have this shifting of people from the cities to the country, if the tendency back to the land is to be a constant movement, there should be a Panama Canal dug to take the place of the icebergs and snows of the present passage. In other words, there should be some organized system of getting peo-

ple back to the land if they want to get back, without wrecking nine out of ten of their cockle-shell boats.

And between ourselves, the country people fleeing from rural delights to the towns need easing into their new berths quite as much as do the city tenderfeet who come to us with their hifalutin talk about humus and legumes and protein and carbohydrates—the patter they have picked up on the printed page.

"I can't do that!" cried Wilberforce Fogg when I showed him the first step from the box factory to the farm, "I can't do that! Don't you see? I want a *home* in the country!"

"All right," said I; "success to you in getting it—and especially in keeping it. Mr. Whelpley may be able to give you better advice than mine. I don't think so, though. Good luck to you."

About a month after this conversation I was accosted on the street in town by a wiry-looking little chap who asked me to step into the bank with him.

"I'm not known here, Mr. Dunham," said he, "and I would like to have you identify me. I have a little check to cash."

I didn't recognize him, and my look told him so.

"Don't you remember me?" asked he. "Here I am on this check;" and I read it, "Wilberforce Fogg." The check was signed by Harry Wade, a new fellow who has located about four miles off to the east of us, and is said to be running an up-to-date dairy farm. The check was for twenty-seven dollars and fifty cents,

and at its lower right-hand corner was written "In full for wages to date."

"M'h'm," I mumbled, as I do sometimes when a thing dawns on me—"so you decided to take the plunge, eh?"

"Yes," said he, "and Mr. Whelpley convinced me that I ought to make it the way you advised me. Mr. Wade says that in another month I'll be a pretty fair hand. I've got over being disgusted with it, now; and sleep! *And* eat! Well, I must buy a few things for Mrs. Wade and hurry home. I have about twenty calves to feed."

When I got home that night my wife was swinging in a hammock-couch on the porch, though it was the time when she should have been at her very busiest getting supper. Something unusual was up, and I put my car in the garage and went to the house to find out what it was.

"Well," said Mrs. Dunham, "I've hired another girl —and she is getting supper."

"Good!" said I. "Where did you pick up a girl? Who is she?"

"Her name is Millie," said my wife, "and Daisy Wiggins picked her up for me. She's from Chicago; and she never worked out before; and whether or not she's any good is to be told when supper is ready, say in about ten minutes from now. But she's got to be pretty poor if she doesn't stay as long as she wants to stay. I've struck for higher wages and shorter hours."

Now there happened to be no girl named Millie in

all my list of acquaintances; but the name seemed strangely familiar. She was a mighty pretty girl, but her general get-up was a little extreme for the kitchen. If her hair had been a little yellower, and had contained a quart or so more of puffs and rats, she'd have passed for the twin of the girl that sells tickets in front of the new moving-picture theater in the county seat—that blonde cashier type, you understand. There was more or less paint on her face, too, as was quite apparent when the heat of cooking brought the blood surging into the thin skin under it. Altogether, she didn't look promising—and her supper was nothing to brag of. From the first it was plain, too, that she was homesick. The paint and powder were washed off in tears as well as sweat, I feel sure, and when the week wore along until Saturday, and she hadn't demanded that she be taken to town, the thing became a marvel to me. I thought I knew hired girls, you know.

On Sunday morning, I was surprised to see Wilberforce Fogg drive into the yard with one of Harry Wade's buckskin bronchos, and still more astonished when Millie, all rigged out in her best ran out, climbed in and went off with him for a drive. I saw it all, now. Millie was the girl of whom Fogg had spoken. She was the other side of the Backtothelandia sketch.

"I think," said I to Mother, "that you now have a hired girl who will stay with you for a while."

I couldn't help feeling an increased respect for the girl, and a growing appreciation of her woman's common sense, as well as her woman's devotion. If Wil-

berforce needed to know country life by actual contact with its roughest and humblest facts, certainly Millie needed to learn the same things. They were engaged in the most important task to which two young people can address themselves, the founding of a home; and first, they were conquering the treetop in which to build their nest—caged birds as they had always been.

As we grew better acquainted with them they used to spend their Sundays with us at the farm instead of driving about the countryside. They were always talking over the business of farming. Millie herself grew rapidly in skill as farm cook and housewife, but the interest she took in the crops, the poultry, the garden, the butter and eggs, the milk, the care and nurture of the young pigs and calves has set her apart from all the women we have ever had helping us on the farm. She was determined to learn everything a farm woman ought to know. She wrestled with her dislike of the drudgery; and she finally conquered it. She never got over looking and acting a little light-minded and frivolous; and Wilberforce never outgrew being an opinionated and contentious little nonentity; and that is the real significance of the experience of these two—they were just ordinary people, with no special ability, no special excellence of character; little money, and no experience. They were only two people very much devoted to each other, one of whom was determined to become a farmer, and both of whom were attacking the farming problem in the right way—going at it systematically, and playing safe.

"I believe theirs is the only way for the city man to get back to the land," said I to Tom Whelpley one day, as we discussed the progress made by Millie and Bill, as she had taught us to call Wilberforce. "Harry Wade is going back to Illinois to settle up his father's estate, and Fogg is to take charge while he is gone. Wouldn't that surprise you? He has become a pretty good dairyman in a little more than a year. As for Millie, we shan't know how to get along without her when Bill takes her away from us. She can cook now, and as for chickens—why that girl made me get her an incubator, just so she could learn to run it on our eggs instead of the Fogg family's investment, and the place is lousy with chickens. It's the only way, Tom, to Backtothelandia."

"It's the best way," said Tom, "but not the only one. I've another family of back-to-the-landers beating along the coast of the promised land, by a different method. And they, too, are making a success of it."

"Who is it?" I asked.

"The Favilles," said Tom.

"Not J. J. Faville, and his lawyer wife! Not they!"

"No," said Tom, "it's Doctor Faville's folks—J. J.'s brother. You know Doc Faville. Get into the car, and we'll run into town and see how they are doing it."

Now the Favilles represent another phase of back-to-the-landing. They were middle-aged people, with a son and daughter pretty nearly grown. Doctor Faville had never had much of a practise; and in the growth of the town, and the influx of new physicians with their

vaccines, serums, microscopes, good clothes, hospital connections and all the new developments the doctor had been lost sight of. He wasn't of the sort that makes a fight for place and position. He always looked sort of seedy. The others were spruce and sanitary-looking. His office was shabby-looking, and while they took rooms in the new office buildings which delivered people by means of elevators, one had to climb to Doctor Faville's old rooms by a stairway. Mrs. Faville had inherited a farm from her father; but neither she nor her husband had ever lived in the country, or knew a thing about farming. Nevertheless, they had come to Tom Whelpley with the question, "Why not move to the farm and make their living off it?" Tom had undertaken the job of educating them for country life.

"And," said Tom, "I'll show you how a family may get half-way back to the land while living in town. I'm taking the Faville family back by easy stages. I think you'll be interested."

I was—and any one would be who sees the pity of unpreparedness to the back-to-the-lander. Tom told the Favilles that the A B C of farming and several of the subsequent letters of the alphabet can be learned on a small scale as well as a large one; so he had advised the Favilles to engage in the cultivation of vacant lots. They found the lots just across the street from their house in town; and under Tom's tutelage had entered upon the systematic cultivation of them with their own hands. They laid off the miniature farm in

plats of a tenth of an acre each, like the test plats at an experiment station. On these they had all sorts of garden crops, and also little squares of wheat, corn, oats, alfalfa, and all the crops of our part of the country. They harvested their wheat at the proper time, threshed it, measured and weighed it, kept account of the labor expended upon it, studied its smuts, blight, Hessian fly, and the rest of them, as religiously as if their livings had depended on the crop. More so, I believe, for they had more time for it. They had a good-sized corn patch from which they were picking green corn for the table, and lots of peas, beans, beets, turnips, onions, lettuce and other vegetables, from which they were religiously selling every bit of produce they could spare, and making entries in their books showing cash taken in. They charged themselves, too, at the market rates for all they ate. They were getting the farm spirit, Tom said. We found Mrs. Faville in the corn, digging for bait, apparently.

"Oh, Mr. Dunham," said she, as we drove up, "do you know anything about the corn-root worm?"

I stopped and thought a moment. Did I really know anything about the corn-root worm? As a matter of fact, most of us old farmers don't—we know we ought to study these things, but we don't. We drift. Mrs. Faville had me. I who had grown corn all my life, plowed for it, harrowed its seed-bed, planted it, cultivated it, husked it, fed it, and eaten it, and who had probably lost thousands of bushels of it by the ravages of the corn-root worm, had to confess that I didn't

know anything about the miserable insect—if a worm is an insect.

"Well, I do congratulate you!" gurgled Mrs. Faville. "That comes of your scientific farming. But we poor ignorant beginners—we have a plot of corn here simply infested with corn-root worms."

"Tom," I asked, "what kind of bug did Marian tell me your classes found in my corn this year?"

"Corn-root worm," said Tom dryly. "Your field is badly infested."

And then Mrs. Faville, courteously shifting the discussions, began showing me corn-root worms, of which I had plowed out thousands and never knew what they were, and exhibiting corn plants suffering from their attacks, and explaining the methods by which their ravages can be controlled. The embarrassing thing about it was that these greenhorns knew far more about the blamed pest than I did. I had been too busy growing corn to study my subject.

"Next year," said Tom, as we drove home, "I'm going to let them grow twenty acres of corn on their own farm by their own labor, allow them to work one team, a fourteen-inch stirring plow, a corn cultivator, a disc harrow, a forty-tooth drag, and a few other tools. I'm going to let them keep one sow and her pigs, a cow whose calf they must raise on skim-milk—and, generally, I'm going to let them have a little skeletonized farm to run. If they don't get sick of it, and can show results in the way of payment for their labor, to say

nothing of interest on investment, I'm going to let them move out on to the farm the year after."

This we call the Faville system for getting back to the land; the other is the Fogg plan. The Faville system has its points of superiority over the Fogg plan, since it gives the back-to-the-lander more reading to do and enables him to confound old farmers like me with catch questions about bugs and worms. It is a system, too, that could be adopted by thousands, if not millions, of city families without breaking up their family arrangements. It gives the back-to-the-lander a reduced facsimile of farm experience. It is about the same sort of preparation for farming that a study of literature is for writing. The corn and wheat and vegetables are agricultural themes, and the things actually eaten or sold are agricultural themes which sell to the editors —such things sometimes take place, I am told. But the Faville system, while it is a good preparation for farming, is not farming.

The Fogg system is—and that makes it in my opinion the true admiralty chart of the route to Backtothelandia. It can't be followed by many men and women who have families; which may prove the truth of the statement that he travels the fastest who travels alone. The families with the craze must be contented with the Faville system, or something not as good. But as for me, give me the system we hit upon that day when we were up against the job of advising Wilberforce Fogg.

When Millie had been working for us for nearly

two years Wilberforce came to me for a talk about his plans. He was still working on the Harry Wade place, and getting forty dollars a month. Wade had inherited so many interests in Illinois that he was remaining there, and his dairy was for sale.

"I won't buy it," said Wilberforce, "as long as I can hold the job of running it at forty a month."

"Why not?" I asked, pleased to hear him laying down the law in such a confident way. He certainly had learned!

"Why," said he, "the fellows who rent land are getting more labor income all over these parts than the men who own their farms. The only reason why you have a better income than I is because you have a big investment on which you have to be allowed interest on the books at the rate of five per cent. Now I calculate that until a farmer has so much money that he is glad to accept a return of five per cent., he had better rent land than buy. Of course, I am not even a renter, yet; but I am shaping things up so I can take a lease when I can get a good one. In the meantime I am putting away money faster than I ever did in the box factory at a hundred a month. If it weren't for one thing I'd rather stay on at forty than to risk starting in for myself on a rented farm with only the equipment I can buy with what I have."

"And that one thing is—Millie?"

Fogg nodded. There were tears in his eyes.

"There ain't many girls——" he started, and then choked up.

"No," said I, "there ain't many girls would do what she has done for you. And, Bill, you will make a great mistake, maybe, if you keep holding off too long. You never will be as well equipped as you'll want to be. I advised you once against starting in as a farmer, and——"

"Yes," said Bill, "and you have saved both of us from shipwreck. We'd have lasted just one season on a farm of our own, green as we were."

"But now," I went on, "you know the game well enough to be careful. You ought to be a pretty good dairyman and farmer by this time, for you've been going to a mighty good school; but Millie is a first-class farmer's wife right now, if she had the chance she's entitled to. She has served her apprenticeship. She'll stick, and she'll make good. Where you had one chance in a hundred to make good when I first saw you, you have nine chances out of ten to win now. From a money point of view, your ideas as to waiting are correct; but you didn't come to the Fairview neighborhood to make money. You wanted to get out into the open, and make a living, you said. Don't advance your ambitions from month to month so that they defeat their own ends. Marry Millie—and make the Dunham family sore at you for taking her away, darn you—but marry her, my boy, marry her."

"Uncle Abner," said he, gripping my hand, "I'd have been willing to pay a lawyer a hundred dollars for that piece of advice. But I'd have been afraid it wasn't on the square. You and Tom Whelpley have worked me

up to the point of worshiping success in farming instead of my God, and loving it so much that I was afraid to give up to my love for my girl!"

"Well," said I, "if that's the case, we have been overplaying our hands. How long can we keep Millie?"

"I swear to goodness," said Wilberforce, turning pale, "if I ain't afraid she'll make me wait now as long as she's had to. I'm scared to death!"

Which system has proved more efficient, the Faville system or the Fogg plan? We can't tell, yet. The Favilles have had a year of full management of their farm, and did pretty well. I think they made about as good returns as the rest of us, though they made several expensive mistakes. But they were cheerful, and they have perfect confidence. Their son and daughter actually engage in farm work, and that is the hardest test there is of acclimatization to Backtothelandia conditions. The Favilles are a mighty good influence among us, because the doctor, while he says he has retired from practise, really has become the health adviser of the neighborhood, and has done more to clean up insanitary conditions than any one else in the county. Mrs. Faville is coming to realize that the farmers' wives are not very different from the women with whom she associated in town—and altogether the Favilles are merging with the Fairview landscape very nicely. They will not fail.

As for the Foggs, there couldn't be any doubt of their success with Millie on the job. I believe, after

all I have done to give him right ideas, that Wilberforce Fogg would run off after fads and into ruin if it weren't for Millie. I went over there the other day for something—they rented the Wade place on some system which gives them half the increase in the herd, and the chance to buy as they can—and observed through the row of willows back of the house a structure which looked like one of the lath traps we used in the early days for trapping prairie chickens. I peeped through the hedge and saw maybe a quarter of an acre all roofed over with lath about two inches apart and seven feet or so from the ground.

"What in tunket," said I to Millie, "is that lath contraption back here?"

Millie laughed, and shook her finger at me warningly.

"You're not supposed to see that," said she. "And I promised Billy I wouldn't tell you. He promised me that if I would consent to this one indulgence he would stop talking about mushrooms, rhubarb in the cellar, Belgian hares, and fat-rumped sheep. You've got to give a child his own way once in a while, Uncle Abner!"

"Yes," said I, "that's all right—but what in time is it?"

Millie put her cupped hand to my ear and whispered into it, "Ginseng!"

Now then, here is the conclusion of the whole matter of people migrating from the cities to the farms as we see it here in the Fairview District—and we've

investigated it, and discussed it, and tried some experiments. We say to the back-to-the-lander:

Spend as much time in preparation for the farm as you would for the practise of any other skilled trade or profession.

Make this preparation both mental and physical. The mental preparation consists in learning the rudiments of farming through actual, daily, serious contact with them.

Don't invest a cent of money in the business until after this preparation has been completed.

If you have any notion of asking others to share in your life on the farm, see to it that they, too, are put through a course of getting used to it—for to many city-bred people life on a farm is only another name for everlasting torture.

The cheapest and best way to learn farming and become used to its experiences is, for a man to work on farms as a hired man until the business takes on system and order and attractiveness in his mind, and seems worth while. For a woman, work as a hired girl in a farm home is the best preparation. Most city people will get disgusted with the life and flee back to the pavements—but better by far have this happen before the inevitable step than after. Sounds like advice against a hasty marriage, doesn't it—and it is a good deal the same thing.

For those who are so situated that this plan is not practicable, the preparation should be made by a year, or preferably two years, of actual personal work in

cultivating gardens and plots of the staple crops expected to be grown on farms; and of rearing fowls, pigs or other stock as opportunity offers. Every one of these operations should be accompanied by a close study of the matter in books and bulletins under competent advice.

After this two years' course, during which the family's city income will not have ceased, the family should take a lease of a farm for two to five years, buy the necessary stock and equipment, and put its ability to make good to the test.

Whichever method is adopted—and there are many variants of both—the capital of the family should not be invested in a farm until after the course of preparation is over.

City people take the matter of going back to the land lightly; I want them to take it seriously. It would be hard to find any one subject on which ignorance is more fatal; and I should like to see the education of city people along these lines carried on in some systematic manner. Only let nobody get the idea that the education can be acquired in the city. Country life ideas decay and become noxious under urban conditions. Bring the city people to the country or they can never, never become acclimated in Backtothelandia. And in any case the Ginseng Virus may persist in their systems from the time when they imbibed misinformation from the reckless and ignorant public prints.

## CHAPTER VII

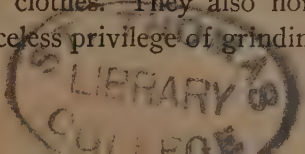
### SEX REBELLION IN FAIRVIEW

THE way we farmers are being uplifted by the city people all over the country is as touching as it is gratifying. Our State Bankers' Association has appointed a Committee on Agriculture, and is holding meetings in luxurious parlors of metropolitan hotels, figuring out what ails the people of the Fairview neighborhood. I think I could give them some significant hints. If they will come out here and look us over right on the ground I'll undertake to teach them in half a day's drive how to tell in a minute as we pass a farm just what ails it. If it has a gone-to-seed look as to fields, and buildings that look as if they were struck with leprosy, it is probably owned in the county seat, and most likely by a bank director or some retired farmer. If it is in good tilth, well fenced, nicely kept, well equipped, spruce, bright, and occasionally given a little but not too much to beautification, it is owned by the man who works it.

For all that, we are glad to have people studying our problems, the chief of which are non-resident ownership and the retiring nature of our yeomanry. We suspect, though, that we people who live on the farms will probably have to solve our own problems. We like city

folks, and will always gladly raid the chicken house and the strawberry bed for the pleasure of setting them down to a table of wholesome country fare; but when they try to do things *for* us we get furious. We don't like to have them do things *to* us, either. But if they will come out and take us by the hand and do things *with* us as man to man, both hunting humbly and unselfishly for the answer to a riddle which is as important to the city as country, we'll go along with them in amity to the end of the road.

But they've got to know more about us than they can learn from their rolltop desks before they succeed in working any great revolution in rural life. A person who never sees us except through the bars of a banker's cage, or across a counter, or from behind a lawyer's desk, is likely to fire high, wild and crooked when he tries to shoot rural folly as it flies. The other night at the schoolhouse, for instance, we had a speech by Mrs. J. J. Faville, a lawyer from the county seat, and sister-in-law to our Doctor Faville. She represents about the average of city intelligence on rural affairs. Her subject was Sex Rebellion. She told us that the factories have taken away the women's work, and that "half the race, disinherited of its priceless privilege of labor, demands its share in the activities of a reconstructed society." The gas and electric light company, she said, relieves the woman of the job of dipping candles. The mills rob her of the task of making clothes. They also hornswoggle her out of the priceless privilege of grinding corn in a mortar, curing



meat, making soap, rendering lard, and all the rest of it. You know how the feminists talk. Why one would have thought from what she said that all the women in the country, except the women wage-earners, are obliged to sit day after day twiddling their thumbs for lack of something to do.

But we let anybody under the sun talk anything on earth at our new consolidated school auditorium. Tom Whelpley, our Principal and the Neighborhood Man-of-All-Work, says it's democratic, and that the schoolhouse platform must be an open forum. At first we shied at some things; but after Adolph Tulp, our thoroughly-Americanized German blacksmith, musician, artist, carpenter, and chief teacher of handicrafts, worked an anarchist in on us under the name of a "voluntarian," and he spoke to a full house on the evils of government—any government, mind you—and it didn't seem to do any harm, we decided that we wouldn't draw the line in the future on anything not actually obscene. So we had a good crowd at the sex rebellion talk by the female lawyer, and enjoyed it. Especially the chicken supper the girls of the domestic economy class served after the speaking, so as to earn credits in their course in domestic economy.

Well, it was funny to watch those farmers' wives sit and listen to that talk on woman's need of something—anything, O Lord, anything! to do. Mrs. J. J. Faville was doing the best she could, but she didn't realize the conditions in the average farm home. Wilson Beebe's wife, who is a suffragist, as, to tell the

truth, most of us are, though not an insurrectionist, had got Mrs. Faville there, and I was sorry for her once or twice.

"I speak," said Mrs. J. J. Faville, "for the millions and millions of women who are reaching out to this man-made society and crying 'Give us back our work!' " —and my wife broke out into a little giggle that broadened over the audience into a sort of general guffaw. We men didn't laugh quite as heartily as the women did, but we laughed—and Mrs. Beebe turned all colors. As for Mrs. J. J. Faville, she hoarsened her voice a little more, the way they do when engaged in public speaking, and never tumbled. She went on to say that the men have taken from the women every job they ever had except that of wet-nurse, and that the baby-food people are out after that. We men were able to laugh again at this, and without that sneaking expression on our faces which we had when the speaker of the evening lamented the paucity of women's work.

Well, I think I can see her side of the case. I have a brother practising medicine in Moline, and his women-folks have mighty little productive work to do, just as Mrs. Faville said. And yet, dishwashing, and sweeping, and dusting, and making beds, and frying meat and cooking eggs and doing in general what cooking the delicatessen miscreants have left—all these are just about as productive in Moline as they are in Fairview; but I don't notice that the women-folks in the family of Doctor Dunham of Moline go to them with any more of a glad cry than does the wife and

daughter of Abner Dunham of Fairview. In fact, they seem to feel disgraced if they are caught at work. They hate like sin—and I sometimes think worse—to answer the door-bell when the maid happens to be on strike. What they want seems to be something different from what they have rather than work. They appear to me to be in the same frame of mind as a man who makes the rounds of places where drinks are sold to find something, as he says, that "will hit the spot." I don't know much about these city women who are said to be yearning for their share in the productive work of the world, something to take the place of the task of grinding the corn, dressing the skins, and planting the beans which savage women discharge; but they seem to me to be just plain fed up on life and hunting for a new beverage which hits the spot. Maybe I'm wrong —and as a matter of fact the wives of a lot of drummers who travel out of our town, and the railroad men's wives, and many others, live pretty empty lives. Their arms are empty, too, mostly; and I sort of suspect that when a woman's arms are empty the vacuum is pretty likely to spread over a good part of the field of life, like a patch of cockle-burrs. (N. B.—Since this was written the war and war's work has changed these things a little—but that's only an interlude.)

Doubtless there's a lot in this question that I'm just plumb ignorant of; but I do know that Mrs. J. J. Faville brought her oratorical pigs to a mighty poor market when she came to the Fairview Public Assembly room with that talk about the women wanting work.

There were nineteen automobiles parked about the schoolhouse yard that night, besides a lot of teams under the hitching shed; but my wife couldn't count up three women in the audience who had any hired help in their houses, and Emmie Henderson is one of the two she counted. That's why we men felt a little sneaking when we joined in the laugh at the speaker's expense—an expense account which she never paid, by the way.

Farming is still one business in which wives and children are an economic asset, instead of a liability. Some young men engaged in farming say they can't afford to marry; but there are more of them who can't see their way clear to take leases of farms until they are. I could name a dozen men in the neighborhood who are rich because of the labor of their wives and children. A hired man or a hired girl may leave, but wives and sons are steadier help. We used to hear a song — I believe it was sung in the school — which shows that these facts got themselves embodied in verse, proving that they were generally recognized as valid arguments by the immigration agents. "To the West! To the West!" it began, and then

"Where a man is a man if he's willing to toil,
And the humblest may gather the fruits of the soil;
Where children are blessings, and he who has most
Has aid in his fortunes and riches to boast;
Where the young may enjoy and the aged may rest—
Away, far away to the land of the West!"

And it was against an oversupply of work and noth-

ing to do it with that the first case of sex rebellion came to the Fairview neighborhood. That is what I started to tell about, but it reminded me of Mrs. J. J. Faville's meeting and the difference between her sort of sex rebellion and Emmie Henderson's. Emmie is my wife's niece. Her husband, Charlie Henderson, is the son of old J. B. (John Bull) Henderson, one of the old settlers and an Englishman. He was a fair farmer; and what with the increase in the price of land and one thing and another, he left Charlie in pretty good shape; but Charlie took a flyer at keeping a store and leaving the farm to renters; and when the sex rebellion broke out he was badly mortgaged up; and he and Emmie and the children had been back on the farm for several years, and were gradually gaining on their debts, and working like dogs as a matter of course.

So I was surprised one day—a fine, windy May day right in the midst of corn-planting—to see Charlie and Emmie drive into the yard in their Concord buggy. I knew that every hour was precious to Charlie, for he was late with his plowing and short-handed. They came just after we had finished dinner, but they wouldn't eat. Emmie and her aunt went into executive session, while Charlie after trying to discuss the season, the prospects for hay and a few other burning issues, gave it up and sat silent. He looked as if he had lost his last friend, but I could see that he did not want to talk about it. Presently my wife came to the door of the room and asked me to come in. "Bring Charlie, too," said she.

Emmie was sitting on the bed, but the prints of her were on the counterpane, and there were wet spots on the pillow. I looked at Charlie with the gaze a man gives another just before he says, "Are you crazy, or an infernal scoundrel? A man with as nice a little wife as you have to act like that—what do you mean by it?" You know how we talk to each other at such times. Somehow, though, Charlie didn't look as though he had been up to that kind of meanness—he just looked beaten and crushed.

"Where's that paper, Emmie?" asked my wife, just as if it had been the third degree. Emmie handed her a paper, and my wife gave it to me, while Charlie averted his eyes as from something unspeakably horrid. I took it, and read that in view of, and whereas, and wherefore, and that is to say, Charlie had given his note for twelve hundred dollars for a lot of farm machinery junk, and had been duly constituted agent for several counties for the Tornado Stalk Cutter, the Holeproof Mower, and the Never-Work Horse Rake —as I remember the names, using therefor a memory notoriously inaccurate. Anyhow, it was perfectly clear that Charlie had given a note for twelve hundred, and the machinery was at the station.

"How did you come to do this?" I asked.

Charlie blushed and stammered. He didn't quite know. He had had an attack of sick headache to which he was subject, and went to town for some medicine, and after getting some relief met a fine-looking man, who took him over to the hotel, where the fine-

looking man and his beautiful wife had taken Charlie into camp for twelve hundred dollars. Emmie was furious and tragic by turns. I think the beautiful wife of the fine-looking man had something to do with her fury; for Charlie had been a deuce of a fellow in his time; and the tragic fits came on when she thought of the ruin which she saw in the twelve hundred dollars of absolute loss.

"What have you done about it?" I asked.

"As soon as I talked the matter over with Emmie," said Charlie, "I saw I had made a fool of myself——"

Emmie reached over and patted his hand. I suspect that this was Charlie's first admission that the transaction was not a perfectly defensible one.

"——and I went to town and tried to find Mr. De Haven and his wife."

Emmie frowned.

"But they had left within an hour of the time I signed the papers. He told me this note was only a matter of form, Uncle Abner——"

"Yes, I know," said I, "but as a matter of form what did you then do?"

"I went to all the banks and warned them not to buy that note."

"None of them had?"

"None."

"Good," said I; "the sympathies of the jury will be against any outsider."

"I'll go on the stand and swear," said my wife in a kind of medico-legal ecstasy, "that Charlie Henderson

is mentally irresponsible when he has one of those sick headaches!"

I'd have given a dollar to have dared to suggest that sick headache and Mrs. De Haven combined were enough to carry any man off his feet, as well as throw him off his head; but I didn't dare.

"I'm afraid you're not an expert, Ma," said I.

"Well, I've had enough to do with darned fool men, so I ought to be able to qualify if any one can!" she retorted—and I dextrously shifted the conversation back to the Henderson crisis.

"Well," said I, "of course you'll fight, Charlie, but you'll probably have to pay the note."

"And costs, and attorney's fees!" groaned Emmie. "Oh, Uncle Abner, we never, never can do it! And after all these years of toiling and worrying and denying ourselves everything, just as we could begin to see a little light after all our losses—to have this happen!"

"I wish," said Charlie, "that I had deeded you the farm the day we were married!"

"If you'd done as you agreed, Charlie Henderson, I'd have had something now to take care of myself and my little children with!"

It developed in the course of the little spat that ensued that Charlie had told Emmie, who was a milliner, that he believed a wife should have her share of the income as it came in, and anyhow, he meant that as a wife she would never have less money week by week than she had as a milliner.

"He wrote me that," said Emmie, "and I believed

he'd do it. But I know now that it was a pretty hard thing for a farmer to do, and after a little while a pinch or so of hard times pinched off my income, and it never sprouted again." She giggled hysterically at her own jest.

"Have you got that letter!" exclaimed my wife.

"Why, yes, Auntie," said Emmie. "I've all of Charlie's letters."

"Deed her everything you've got!" said my wife. "It won't half pay her. You owe it to her legally. Do it before that note turns up in some shark lawyer's hands. Do it to-day!"

Well, my wife is nobody's fool when it comes to a business matter, and Charlie made the deeds. He gave her bills of sale and deeds, and became a hired man. It wasn't necessary, though, as it turned out; for within a week Mr. De Haven was arrested at Springfield; and though Charlie's note wasn't found among his papers, it never turned up, and is outlawed long ago, if it ever was valid. That's the prelude to the Henderson story.

Time then proceeded to roll on. Charlie continued to work the farm just as he always had done, and the transfer of his property didn't seem to hurt his standing any; because everybody knew the circumstances, and gave him credit for being honest. Credit among farmers and between them and bankers is more a matter of the family and the farm, anyhow, than a question of the ins and outs of the record of transactions. Probably the banks would have given Charlie

credit all the more freely because he took measures to fight a swindler instead of knuckling down. Besides he was twelve hundred dollars nearer solvent than he would have been if he had paid up a debt for which he had got nothing. Lawyers said that the transfer was perfectly good, too, under our laws as they then stood, and my wife felt as pleased as Punch whenever we talked about the Henderson matter and her advice to Charlie to settle his antenuptial contract first and await the De Haven onslaught second.

But Charlie Henderson didn't seem so pleased. He was humiliated every time he thought of the De Haven foolishness. He blushed and cringed every time he was told by any business man just to let his wife sign these papers with him. But he still was afraid to take the title of his own property, because that note had never appeared, and until it was outlawed by lapse of time an "innocent purchaser" might turn up with it any old moment. In fact there were three or four sharks in town, and an indeterminate number of them elsewhere, whom Charlie Henderson visualized as searching the records daily for the transfers from Emmie back to him, so as to jump him with summons, lis pendens, and attachment. He wasn't out of the woods; but as years rolled by he could faintly see glimmerings ahead of the openings between the trees.

In the meantime, things were continuing to improve with the farm. Charlie went into dairying, and built a whale of a barn, and a good silo. He had every improved machine he could get for his field work—

binder, silage cutter, corn harvester, pumping engine, feed grinder, the most advanced styles in planters and cultivators; and was seriously thinking of a tractor plow, when the women's club held its momentous session after the burning of Hugh Clark's house. That very day he had said to his wife, thinking that the statute of limitations would soon have run against that ghastly note: "It isn't very pleasant to have to come to you to have every paper signed."

"No," answered Emmie, "I don't suppose it is."

"To be just the same in law as hired help in your own home, but without any fixed wages, and bound to stay through thick and thin, and with all the responsibility a person carries is—it kind of gets on a fellow's nerves," ventured Charles.

"I know just how you feel," answered Emmie. "I stood it for eleven years."

"But it's different with a man," said Charlie.

"*Is* it!" said Emmie, with the falling inflection and the emphasis on the "is."

Charlie never admitted in his mind that her implied challenge had anything in it; but all the same he took half a day to the job of crawling up out of his boots.

I think Emmie's sense of justice was sort of inflamed and congested that day, for she went to the meeting of the women's club in the lecture-room in the new schoolhouse all het up inwardly and simmering. She found Mrs. Frank Wiggins—our minister's Daisy wife—presiding. The meeting was doing something rather queer, most people would say—holding a

session of the architectural section on the rebuilding of Hugh Clark's house. Tom Whelpley, the principal, had organized the Fairview Cooperative Fire Insurance Company, of which he was secretary, and this being the first loss, was present to assure Mrs. Clark, and the rest of the women, that the money to pay it in full would be ready on the next Saturday; and Adolph Tulp, artisan in-ordinary for the district, was there with a lot of plans for up-to-date farmhouses which he had gleaned from architectural books and farm papers, and with about twenty designs made as class exercises by the older pupils in the school, and one of his own which followed pretty closely a rough plan given him by the Clarks. Mrs. Clark was there; and they were buzzing like a beehive, each as much interested in the new house as if it had been her own.

That's the way we do things in our district since Frank Wiggins and Tom Whelpley gave us the facilities. Lots of folks think that these two, a teacher and a preacher, and especially Daisy, and to some extent Maude Ackerman, who has become mighty important to us all, and especially to Tom Whelpley since she came back to the neighborhood as one of our teachers —lots of folks say that they bamboozle us and make us do as they please. But we are a conservative people, and mighty set in our ways, and we do just as we please. We are noted for pulling together for the common good, and some lunatics say we have the most completely "socialized" neighborhood in the country; but as a matter of fact if we do things differently from

our old ways it is merely that in Daisy and Maude and Frank and Tom we have four hired people who can run errands for us and organize labors which otherwise wouldn't be done at all. This saves us a great deal of time, and, of course, it makes these four people pretty prominent; but any one who thinks we old fogies don't know just what we are doing at every turn of the road has another guess coming.

This meeting on Hugh Clark's new house, for instance—it was nothing on earth but organized gossip. It was the ordinary chatter about a new house, only Daisy Wiggins had bunched it in a meeting, and Adolph Tulp had furnished it with drawings and estimates, and it was getting somewhere. It was just the same with my new hog-house last fall—we had every design ever seen, and yet I held to my original idea except for Wilson Beebe's scheme for letting in the sun, and Bert Wiley's idea for putting sawdust instead of sand in the concrete for the feeding floor to keep the hogs from getting rheumatism on account of the cold character of ordinary cement mixtures. We go to school to each other a lot, in the Fairview neighborhood, and that's the whole secret of our progress—but we don't let any one run us.

They decided that the bathroom should be finished in that white cement that costs so much less than tile, and is perfectly sanitary, and should have a door opening on the veranda, so that Hugh and the men could go in and bathe before really coming into the house—

and at the same time it would be convenient for use from the inside.

"Bathroom!" burst out Emmie Henderson. "My idea of heaven is a place filled with pretty children, and bathtubs of soft water—hot and cold. I congratulate you on your fire, Mrs. Clark!"

"Oh, thank you!" replied Mrs. Clark, just a little embarrassed at Emmie's remark. "And have you seen the way we get the water all over the house, and with so little expense?"

"Vell," said Adolph, "de oxpense alvays overestimates us. It may cost a liddle more."

"I'd like," said Emmie, "to have a definite proposition from Satan to give me for my soul running water, hot and cold, in my kitchen—or to mortgage a few years of my life for it."

"Well," said Daisy, "the thing that seems to give us the most trouble is the lighting system."

"Lighting system?" said Emmie, interrogatively. "'Had I lain for a century dead,' you would find my hands smelling of kerosene from filling lamps. Are there such things in the world as lighting systems—for farmers' wives?"

"Well, Emmie," said my wife reprovingly—for Emmie is her sister's girl—"ain't you getting a little free with remarks about serious things?"

Emmie gave a short kind of laugh and didn't reply. Charlie, her husband, drove up in his little car to take her home when the meeting would be over, having been

to town after some castings for a disk harrow; and sat down in the back part of the room alongside Hugh Clark. He and Hugh and Adolph Tulp were the only men there, Tom Whelpley having made his financial report and gone up-stairs to his school work.

"Well," said Daisy, as the time came to adjourn, speaking in that bright and bubbly way of hers, "I'm sure this has been a perfectly splendid meeting. We shall all feel a warmer neighborliness toward the new Clark house, because we have all had something to do with making it just as nice as it can be. We'll feel toward the house a little as an artist does toward a picture he has painted—it belongs to some one else, but there is something of him in it. Why, as new houses replace old ones, if this architectural section of the women's club continues to work out the plans and arrangements, this will be a neighborhood of little farmhouse masterpieces. And the owners won't love them much better than the neighbors do—and I can't think of anything nicer than that! Has any one any suggestions as to our next program? If not——"

Emmie Henderson rose. "Madame President," she said, "the remodeling of our house has become an imperative necessity. It has been decided that this work must be done immediately. I should be very glad if the architectural section will take up the plans at its first meeting. Of course," went on Emmie, gazing steadily at Charlie, who was looking wildly from one person to another as if to verify his own impressions as to this incredible enormity—"of course I have my

own plans and have had for many years. Just as Monte Cristo, or the Man in the Iron Mask, or the poor wretches in Libby Prison thought about escape when it seemed impossible that it could ever come, and even planned for it when their plans appeared quite outside the field of reason, so, I believe, every farmer's wife who is sentenced to hard labor for life in a house like ours makes plans for a better one. I have, I know, for years. I think I should have dropped in my tracks like a camel who decides that the load is too heavy for him, if I couldn't have planned. But I have heard so much here in the way of helpful suggestions that I don't want to miss having the benefits of the common thought. Everybody knows more than anybody. And you, Mr. Tulp, I want your help especially, and if your high-school classes can, under your direction, help out with estimates, drawings and suggestions, I shall be very much obliged to you and the school."

"Ve vould be almost glad to pay you for the problem," said Adolph. "It iss ferry valuable work for the school. Ve do not get enough of it to do—and in our high school ve dislike the problem vich iss not related to actual life. Perhaps you vill give us some cheneral idea of vat you mean to do in water supply, lighting, and such things."

"The intention is," explained Emmie, with rising color, as she noticed the gathering wrath as well as horror in Charlie's expression, "to make the house and the woman's side of the farm as convenient as the barn, and the man's field of work. This means some

central lighting system to relieve me of the disgusting and never-ending task of filling, cleaning and lighting kerosene lamps. It means a central heating system which will take off my hands the barbarous labor of shoveling soft coal into sooty stoves and keeping my mind on what fires we have when the men are out of the house in cold weather, and which will heat the house evenly all over, and thus rid us of the draughts and physically shocking changes of temperature in winter caused by the fact that only a portion of the house is heated at all. It means some arrangement for saving me the choice of hanging out my clothes on an outdoor line at the risk of my life in bad weather, or making the house unfit to live in by putting them up in the rooms. It means a modern kitchen, with a dish-washing contrivance of some kind, and water always hot to use in it, a good kitchen cabinet, a refrigerator with ice always on hand, a gasoline or oil range, fireless cooker and a linoleum floor. It means a thoroughly sanitary modern bathroom. It means a mangle for the clothes, and a washing-machine—both run by motors of some sort. It means the removal of the milk and cream from the house, and it means milking machinery —the whole thing to be run by the men. It means a house fit to live in! If I can get domestic help I expect to have it as soon as I have a house with a maid's room in which I can ask a human being to live in the winter; but there will be times when I shall not have help; and this house must be replanned to make my

work just as easy as it is humanly possible to make it on a farm."

"About how much," inquired Adolph, who had been making notes, "do you expect to spend on this interesting work?"

Charlie Henderson had been gripping his chair for five minutes, and as Emmie went on with her horrifying list of demands as astounding to him as were Japan's to Yuan Shi-kai, he slowly rose, so that as Adolph asked his epochal question Charlie was about three-fourths standing. He paused in his attitude of pugilistic crouch, with a good deal of the pugilist's expression on his face—paused to hear his wife's estimate of cost.

"We expect to spend," said she, looking right at Charlie, "about twelve hundred dollars—with the interest on that amount for five years!"

Charlie dropped back into his seat as if he had been shot. People looked at one another in bewilderment for a moment; and then those significant glances began to pass from eye to eye which showed that they understood that the duel which they had witnessed between Charlie and Emmie related to that transfer of the Henderson property to the wife. The mention of the sum, and the five years' interest, left the work of our amateur Hawkshaws pretty easy. Emmie had rebelled. She was taking the bit in her teeth. She, as the owner of the farm and the personal property, was going to remodel the house whether her husband agreed to the

project or not. And right there sex rebellion started in the Fairview neighborhood. It was rebellion, not of the sort described by Mrs. J. J. Faville, Attorney and Counselor at Law, the rallying cry of which was "More work!" but a crusade for less work, more help, and better equipment in the homes. The light of battle spread from face to face. Daisy Wiggins, who was one of the latest to understand what was taking place, felt the tension, and began to talk in some soothing strain to let things down to their normal level.

The situation was saved by Tom Whelpley, who came in just at the last, and hearing something about washing machines, introduced the subject of a cooperative laundry. He and Miss Falk, our teacher in domestic economy, and the big girls in the school, together with Adolph Tulp's boys, had been making plans for a laundry to be run in connection with the school. There would be one or two hired people, but a lot of the work would be done by the students of domestic economy, and the boys could construct the building with some hired assistance, and install the machinery. If they would start a cooperative creamery at the same time, said Tom, the overhead would be cut down, and the experience in one or two places in Minnesota and Wisconsin showed that the two establishments fitted into each other like a finger in a glove. It would all be truly educational, too, and a significant development of what the world was beginning to call "the Fairview idea."

Amidst this diversion the Hendersons escaped and

went away in their flivver; and then Tom saw that something kept the women from paying attention to what he said, and the meeting adjourned—but the laundry-creamery project had been started, and will be in operation within three months. That's the way we do things in Fairveiw; show us a good conservative, common-sense proposition and we hop to it. Washing and butter-making are really collective jobs—why saddle them on our women-folks?

Nobody knows just what took place between Emmie and Charlie; but it is known that they went clear around by the old Simons schoolhouse, got home late, and acted like lovers coming home. Emmie tells my wife that she stood pat and told Charlie that she was going to make those improvements, and he might as well make the best of it. She had the property, and she guessed the property was good for it. He said he couldn't afford it. She said if they couldn't afford to make life worth living for her and her children she wouldn't stay on the farm another year—anyhow, he never held back from buying things he needed in his work. He argued that he never bought anything that didn't add to the earning capacity of the farm. She retorted that if her health and comfort and everything that makes the difference between a slave and a free white person was to be sunk in the mire of earning capacity, she was ready to quit. She would not live a life that put a woman so far below a dollar, so there!

Well, as a matter of fact, I don't blame him for giving up. They really couldn't afford the outlay, but

they made it, and they lived through it, and the only thing I see in which they have been the worse for it is their inability to show as great a "labor income" on Doctor Spillman's balance sheet as they could have done if they hadn't rebuilt the house. I'm sorry that the books can not be made to show happiness. If we all lived in dugouts there would be less investment on which we would have to earn interest before Doctor Spillman's investigators will give us credit for "labor income." I believe Emmie did Charlie a real favor in making this fight just as she did, rather than to make his life a burden until he left the farm and took her to town, as so many farmers' wives have to do in pure self-preservation.

Women run the world after all! They don't run it this year, but their grip on the years hence is unshakable; and we can never have a firmly-established country life with the women rebellious and dissatisfied, as so many of them are. To be sure, according to Mrs. J. J. Faville, the women in the cities are rebellious and dissatisfied, too; but there's nowhere for them to go, while there's always the city beckoning to the country woman. The current is running toward the city anyhow; and it's a whole lot easier to stop the driftwood in the mill-pond than on the riffles.

Then, as I said before, and as a conservative business man, I repeat it, the women of the farms are economically important. They feed the men that till the farms; and until men can go to work without breakfast and to bed without supper, the women who

feed them have to be given credit for their share in the growing of crops. The food they preserve is no small item in the national wealth. And as for production, the women and children of Iowa, for instance, sell more eggs every year than the entire orange crop of the United States is worth — and if you don't think the orange business amounts to something, go to Washington some time when there is a tariff bill up. The orange growers will make more fuss than all the women in the Mississippi Valley. Why, when you give the women of the rural districts credit for what they do to make it possible for the men to work, and for what they actually produce in good tangible wealth, their economic importance is just as great as that of the men.

I shouldn't make this distinction if it were not the immemorial habit of the world to make it. In neighborhoods like ours it is just as impossible to segregate the economic value of women from that of men as to tell whether it is the oxygen or the hydrogen in the water which quenches thirst. I suspect that except among wage-earning classes the case is different in the cities. The farming business, however, rests on the conservation of the woman crop. In making that statement I'm putting it on a pretty low basis; but anybody with a grain of sense can see the humanities of the case. We feel different in our neighborhood, too, since Emmie's rebellion set up a regular fever for better things in the house. We were easy marks for a long time after that for plumbers, agents for house-

hold machines and equipment, and dealers in building supplies. We're all glad of it now, though, but it was a stressful time at first.

At the best, the farm is no place for the lazy or frivolous woman, but we can prove to you that it is a good place for women of intelligence, refinement, some learning, a lot of public spirit, and good looks. And much of our condition—which we are assured is rather exceptional—dates from that day when Emmie Henderson laid the foundation for the celebration of the fifth anniversary of the day when Charlie became acquainted with the seductive Mr. and Mrs. De Haven.

She celebrated it in her remodeled home by laying on Charlie's plate the deeds and bills of sale which legally wiped out the whole De Haven episode.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE FAIRVIEW GIRL CROP

THE very first Fairview story I wrote, you remember, dealt with Herman Lutz, who by retiring to spend his remaining days in the ease and comfort of the city did all he could to cut down, as I think, the number of his days and found little ease or comfort. You remember, too, I hope, the vague reference to that handsome daughter of his, Kate, and her way, all unfitted as she was for that sort of life, of finding ease and comfort in towns and town life. Well, I thought then that Kate Lutz had passed from the life of the Fairview settlement forever; but she returned a few months ago, like one of those comets with an uncertain period of revolution, and passed away again. In passing, she flooded the mind of one old mossback of a farmer with a lurid light which will not fade for a long time; and she may have done something for the girls she left behind her.

It was this way. I came in from the field one day, unhitched my horses, watered them, and went into the house for a siesta on the sofa before supper, when I found Daisy Wiggins, the minister's wife, waiting for me.

"How de do, Daisy," I remarked.

"Pretty well, Uncle Abner," she replied. And then for a long time there wasn't anything said. I stretched myself out for my nap, thinking that Daisy was using the sitting-room as a waiting place while time ripened some arrangement between herself and my wife. Finally, however, she opened the discussion.

"Uncle Abner," she inquired, "how are the crops?"

"Pretty fair," I replied. "The corn is backward on account of the cool weather, but it's clean of weeds, because it has been dry and the cultivation has killed them. Hay is a short crop; but the hot season is just coming on, and the corn is sure to boom if we get what August generally gives us; and we can make up in silage what we lack in timothy and clover. The price of cattle is off—the beef trust is trying to drive us all out of business, I guess—but the hogs will probably keep us about even with the board in live stock. I have a notion to quit the beef game and go into dairying. The fellows that sell cream and milk are beating me all hollow. But if everybody goes into cows, won't there be an overproduction of dairy products? I can't see any solution of the farmer's problem, Daisy, and——"

"Mercy!" said she, and then:

"What are the farmer's greatest problems, Uncle Abner?" she queried.

"Making a living on the farm, and putting a little aside for a rainy day. Getting fair profits out of the land without robbing the soil. Beating the hardest game——"

"How's the girl crop in Fairview, Uncle Abner?"

I sat up and stared at her. She was looking at me with the same expression—determined, and at the same time exalted—with which she addressed me when she first brought the Reverend Frank to us and stated that they were going to become pioneers again, as her great-grandfather had been in the old Fairview settlement; only they were determined to be pioneers in rebuilding the state their forefathers had builded. They were going to become missionaries in the Corn Belt, trying to make our faltering rural Christianity work again through a new and really rural sort of rural church. She had the same sort of holy audacity in her manner now that she had when they flim-flammed me out of that fifteen acres of marsh which Frank drained and made into a glebeland attached to the Fairview Meeting House.

"How's the girl crop in Fairview?" she repeated, seeing me gaping at her with nothing to say.

"Why," said I cautiously, for I knew there was some sort of catch in her question, "I dunno——"

"You don't know!" she repeated, as if accusing me of crime. "You don't know! And neither does any man in this district. But you know about hay and corn and silage and cattle and hogs! And yet the girl crop makes a dreadful failure of the life of the whole neighborhood if it fails. 'How much then is a man better than a sheep?' "

"Not much," said I, "but sheep and goats look after their crop of girls in their way. What's the trouble?"

"Uncle Abner," said she, "I want to go to Saint Paul, or Minneapolis—I never can remember which—and on to Fargo; and I want Maude Ackerman to go with me—and I haven't the money! And if I undertake to explain why we want to go, you'll think it's foolishness—and it is the deepest wisdom!"

"Well," said I, "I used to give my boys and girls a quarter once in a while and tell them to spend it foolishly; it seemed to sort of make up for the times when people gave them nickels with the caution that they were to see that they spent them wisely. That always made the gift worthless to me when I was a boy. The children called them their foolish quarters. Does little Daisy want a foolish quarter?"

"Call it that," said she. "It won't cost so very much. I know college people at both places that have asked me to visit them oceans of times; and they'd be glad to have Maude go with me. Do you think a special fund could be collected, and no questions asked?"

"I suppose," said I, "that I may say that it concerns the Fairview crop of girls?"

"You may if you like," said she, "but it will help the boys and women and men as well as the girls. Such things always do. And I won't say that this trip is actually and essentially necessary to our campaign—"

"So it's another campaign, is it?"

"Yes; and Uncle Abner, it grows out of the neglect of the girl crop in Fairview. It grows out of the fact that we've been forgetting that farm girls aren't quite

the same as farm boys. This neighborhood has become noted among the countrysides of the United States as being the home of the Fairview Idea in country living; but the Fairview Idea is not complete."

"What blight or mildew has struck the girl crop in Fairview?" I asked. "I haven't noticed anything wrong. I think we have the nicest, prettiest, wholesomest lot of girls we've had in the neighborhood, since I went courting—of course the girls were a notch higher then. What's the matter, Daisy?"

"They look happy to you, do they?"

"They certainly do."

"And they are happier I hope than the girls were when Frank and I came, and before Tom Whelpley began building happiness into the very basis of our neighborhood life by filling everybody's mind with the wonder and mystery and challenge of farm living through a truly rural rural school. But girls want something more."

"Something more?"

"Something different."

"Well, by George!" I ejaculated, "I like their nerve! You can't satisfy a woman! It's impossible! Why when I think of the way your great-grandmother used to live—"

"Now that will be about all on that line, Uncle Abner," said Daisy. "My great-grandmother rode in the covered wagon and shared the storms and risks of the prairies. But she stood by my great-grandfather's side, and they fought the same fight—exactly the same

fight. There was nothing he expected to achieve which she did not expect to share. Life was simpler then. There were no great cities just beyond the horizon; and who knows, anyhow, what her discontents were as she looked out at the stars from the bed under the wagon? You never can satisfy women? Of course not! Every woman, every girl, is a true daughter of the horse-leech, and cries 'Give! Give!' from birth to death. We of the Fairview neighborhood have been giving them much; but too much of it—and Frank and I have been partners in the mistake—has been economic. Too much in the way of canning clubs, scientific agriculture, milk, butter, pigs, calves, colts, soils, and marketing. Not enough of the light that never was on land or sea. Do you understand? Of course not! I myself scarcely understand."

"I think I have some notion," said I. "Having no wings, a woman wants to fly; without the mermaid's nature, she nevertheless wants to dive to the unfathomable; without any special efficiency she wants to do the undoable; without much of a brain—any more than the rest of us, anyhow—she wants to know the unknowable; and though everybody knows she hasn't a bit of mechanical knack, she wants to unscrew the unscrutable! That's women for you! And when she can't satisfy these yearnings she pouts, and blames it on farm life. Your great-grandmother Raymond carried water from the spring, cooked the meals, suckled her children, and didn't care whether the unscrutable was unscrewed or not. And I wish all our girls were

back where she was. It would simplify matters a whole lot!"

I spoke with some heat. I hadn't indulged myself in primitive man's ancient luxury, an outbreak against women, for years and years. It comforted me. A little sex antagonism is a part of the game of life, I reckon—anyhow it comforted me, even while the first little wave of shame rippled through my consciousness. Daisy giggled, just as she always did sooner or later in any serious discussion.

"Poor Uncle Abner!" she purred. "Has to live in a world half full of darned old women!"

"Shame!" said I.

"Just what I say!" she agreed. "But let me tell you a little of this thing that I don't understand. A girl —for remember we are discussing the girl crop—lives two lives. So does a boy. So does everybody, I guess; but let's consider for a moment a girl's secret and sacred life. It is a life of marriage and giving in marriage. Even the oldest old maid marches to the altar often and often in her inner life. It is habitual with her. A girl may not know what it is that she is all the time dramatizing in her visions, and may even deny to herself that she does this thing of which I speak; but she does it, all the same. The white-veiled figure beside the knight in armor looks like an angel or a fairy or a princess as the girl beholds the cortège passing on with bursts of music and the scent of orange blossoms—but it is she herself every time."

"That's not peculiar to girls," said I. "Much you know of boys, Daisy!"

"Well," said she, "this I know: Boys' natures are more satisfyingly filled with acres and crops and live stock than are the nature of girls—or they seem to be. The boys in Fairview are happier than the girls—though I admit we have made things some better for the girls too. But girls hear of the great world outside as a place of delicious mysteries. They read more than the boys do, and they read of the romantic and wonderful things that happen to girls in cities. They sing more than boys do, and they always sing of love—somehow our song writers never find anything else worth singing. They clip and keep poems—always love poems. Girls need art!"

"Art!" said I. "Crayon enlargements of photographs? Oil paintings from studies that you pay fifty cents for and are always prettier than the paintings from them? Burnt wood? 'God Bless Our Home' and 'What is Home without a Mother' in colored yarns on perforated paper? Calla lilies and American beauties on plaques? We've had all of these since I was a boy—and none of them seemed to prove Bordeaux mixture for our inward blight."

"You're invaluable to me, Uncle Abner," said Daisy. "You react so accurately to every test in the average manner! Did you ever hear of dramatic art?"

"It's what the fellows do who paint the scenery in theaters," I answered, very promptly.

Daisy giggled again, and said I was a hundred per cent. Philistine, net.

"Girls," said she, "need little accomplishments, so

that when the boys come around they may do things which will lift them above, or at least seem to put them outside the common life. So much they imperatively need, or they fail to give the boys their due by being mysteries, Uncle Abner."

"Mysteries!" I exclaimed. "They're worse than that. They're conundrums. Man was the conundrum of the ancient philosophers, and woman is the conundrum of to-day. We can't guess her——"

"But you'll never give her up, will you, Uncle Abner!" cried Daisy—and then we both giggled together.

"And you think," I inquired, "that you can bring some of this mystery for the girls back from the prairies of Minnesota and North Dakota?"

She nodded affirmatively.

"It doesn't look reasonable to me," said I, "and I don't think it will look plausible to the men of the church who'll have to make up this expense fund. Maybe you'd better tell me more about your plans."

"Do you want me to have a foolish quarter," she inquired, "or must I not only spend it wisely but tell just how I shall spend it before I get it? Is that the way you give quarters to be spent foolishly?"

"I guess the fellows will leave it to you and Maude," said I. And so they did.

Daisy and Maude went on their journey, and Abel Bohn and the others who made up their small purse kissed their money good-by; and laughed among themselves at the queerness of women, even such sensible women as Daisy Wiggins. At the same time we were

curious about their errand, and I sent to Minnesota and North Dakota and got all the literature of their Experiment Stations I could beg, but none of it seemed quite in point on the girl proposition. Finally they returned, after writing to Adolph Tulp from somewhere near Bismarck to call a meeting of the Neighborhood Club at the assembly room of the schoolhouse for Friday evening.

That was a Monday. Tuesday we cut our second cutting of alfalfa; and Tuesday night it rained and spoiled it. Wednesday I couldn't see why any one should be a farmer, and walked over to have a talk with Frank Wiggins; and to look at that fifteen-acre patch of glebeland, now growing enough celery, potatoes and cantaloupe to support Frank and Daisy and their two babies—with the addition of the milk from three Guernseys, which never went out of the little barn except for exercise, and yielded over ten thousand pounds of milk each a year. There were some mighty nice swine and poultry about the place, too; and I loitered as I came in by the back way from my own fields, and looked things over. It was as prosperous a little farm as I ever saw; and while it did not prove to my mind that intensive farming ought to take the place of extensive farming in the Corn Belt, it did set me thinking and querying as to whether or not Doctor Spillman's finding of facts for extensive farming is necessarily the last word on the subject, when I heard the murmur of voices in the manse—Frank's voice, Daisy's and another. I tapped on the kitchen door, and getting

no reply, went on in. This is the custom. It is like entering the house of your son or your father, you know!

I stepped to the door of the little parlor, and was met by Frank in a way that suggested that he had suddenly started up to bar out intrusion.

"Hello, Uncle Abner," said he, making awful faces, and motioning me away. "Glad you came! I want to show you the prettiest litter of pigs——"

"If that's Uncle Abner Dunham," said a voice—not Daisy's—from within, "bring him in. I want him to have the pleasure of meeting the lost sheep."

I went in, and saw, seated in Daisy's best wicker chair, a young woman who looked incredibly strange there, and yet familiar. I knew her in a minute—she was Kate Lutz! She was dressed in a flimsy, sleazy stuff which looked like an imitation of something expensive, and something not meant for wear in the country unless at a party, or something of that sort—kind of out of place, you know, but pretty for all that. Her skin was pale; she looked well-fed, but sort of soft like a horse that's stood in the barn all winter and had no exercise, but has been kept on full feed. Her face was made whiter by powder, and her eyebrows and lashes were jet black. So was her hair. There was paint on her cheeks—just a little—and her lips were too red. She looked a little desperate, probably on account of the whites of her eyes showing so much, like an excited heifer's—but I could see that with this girl it was her ordinary expression. She rose as I went

in, and offering her hand, said, "How's every little thing, Uncle Abner? Kill the prodigal; the calf's returned!"

I took her hand, and held it while she looked me in the eye quite steadily, but as if she found it a little difficult.

"You're Herman Lutz's girl, Kate!" said I.

"Correct, Sherlock!" she replied; "sit down and see these good people take me apart. And after the autopsy, we'll talk about Aunt Lucy."

I sat, but none of us could say anything at first. Then Daisy began, quite as if talking of some absent person. "Kate is a Fairview girl," she said, "who has left us, as a great many other girls would like to leave us. She and I are trying to get at the heart of the problem."

"This, then," said I, "is a part of the study of what ails the girl crop of Fairview?"

"Well," said Kate, "you'll never do anything to make things better. The best the farm girl gets is the worst of it; but it's a comfort to know that some one's getting wise to the fact that something's the matter. When I was here nobody thought a girl's life worth studying. It was, 'Here, young woman, take that dish-cloth and get busy, and no more whimpering around! What do you want, anyhow? As good a home as you've got—I should think you'd be ashamed! When I was your age' —and the rest of it. And I s'pose it's the same yet. Poor kids! And at that they're a darned sight better off than some of us, if they only knew it. But some

things you'll never know till you've stuck your finger into the machinery."

She laughed, a laugh which was too loud and defiant. Her voice, even in speaking, was rougher and more brassy than I like to hear.

"Were you as pretty," asked Daisy, "as a young girl as you are now?"

"As I am now?" Kate laughed again, that same out-of-tune brassy laugh. "Say I like that! I was as pretty, if I'd had any style to me, as a red wagon. I was some kid, wasn't I, Uncle Abner?"

"Yes," said I, "you were."

"Past tense from honest old Uncle Abner!" said Kate with another laugh.

"Every girl, almost," said Daisy, "is pretty in one way or another, and knows it. How did your beauty effect your feeling toward the farm?"

Kate sat silent. For the first time she had no ready answer.

"Did you feel that farm life robbed you of your—your—" Daisy hesitated.

"My market?" asked Kate—and then hurried on. "Why not in them words. I just felt that in the city I'd meet more people. I felt that I'd be in society like what I used to read of—wouldn't that simply assassinate you!"

"I see," said Daisy. "You'd meet more people in the city who would like your looks. And perhaps among them would be the man who would make you his idol!"

"Sure to be, I thought," said Kate. "Oh, I was the prize boob! But what did I know, with a family that thought that if I had clothes on my back and plenty to eat it was all I needed!"

"I suppose," went on Daisy softly, "that you were all the time waiting for adventure, and never having it come to you?"

Evidently this was too subtle for Kate, for she repeated the word "adventure" and stopped.

"Things never happened to you on the farm?"

"Never!" said Kate. "Everything was dead, dead! I wanted life. I wanted beaux. I wanted to be in things in which the boys and girls could mingle, and flirt, and dance, and sing, and play around together. While I was from twelve to fifteen, I was happy, because I could play with the boys like a boy; but after I had to put on long dresses, and when I got to looking like a woman, all that was over. Then the boys never came around except to spark—and I hated that. I didn't want to get married and have a raft of kids, and wash dishes and bake and roast myself over a stove or a washtub all the time, and make butter and fret and stew and mop and iron and mend and make and slave all the time and never stick my head over the front gate except to go to church and hear old Preacher Brown spell Hannah one Sunday and spell it backwards the next!"

"I'm afraid," said Frank, "that all of us preachers are in danger of falling into the habit of spelling Hannah backwards. Don't be too hard on us!"

"Oh, you're all right," said Kate. "I wish I'd been able to do as Parson Brown said, at that. But I couldn't. I simply couldn't."

"There wasn't any fun in his religion," said Frank.

"Fun!" scoffed Kate. "Say, when there's fun in religion, good health will be catching!"

"Both things are true," said Frank, "if we only knew!"

"Things are different here now, Kate," said I.

"Not as different," said Daisy, "as they will be!"

"Well," said Kate, "sometimes things get bad for a while, and then take a turn and get worse; but I'll bet you haven't made any changes in Fairview to make it any rottener for the girls."

"Did you know Ethel Wyatt?" I asked. "Her father was a renter in your time, and lived over near the Willow Creek ford."

"Sure, I know her," said Kate. "Little homely thing that was always going around with her nose in a book. What has she done?"

"She's married long ago," said I, "and still lives on the old place. Her husband bought it, and is paying for it. She seems to be happy. She writes for the farm papers on the beauties of farm life. She studies birds, and insects, and plants. She is a nature lover, and is so active in the women's club—"

"Well," said Kate, "them that likes bug hunting, and learning the first names of flowers and birds and snakes are welcome to all they get out of it. But excuse me!"

"Ethel is one of the sort for whom farm life was

always the most pleasant in the world," said Daisy. "I mean the nature lovers and those to whom the sunrise is a poem. I'm sorry there are so few of them. We can't run things for that kind alone, or we'll run into ruin."

"Give me people," said Kate, "or give me death."

"Me, too," said Daisy.

"And," went on Kate, "I guess getting your fill of people is about the same as the other thing." For the first time, she showed signs of emotion. She brushed her handkerchief across her eyes. "Well," she went on, "I guess I'll have to step on the accelerator. The fellow I swiped that flivver from may get out a posse."

"Oh, I guess not!" said Daisy.

"I guess not, too," said Kate; "but I must trot along all the same."

"I'm having a plate put on for you," said Daisy. "I want you to stay. Would it have helped you if there had been dances—nice dances, where the old folks go and take their children home, and there is a musical programme, or maybe a lecture or a picture show, and something to eat?"

"It would have helped a lot," said Kate, "if I could have had pretty dresses to wear, and my folks would have taken me. They didn't believe in dancing, though."

"You hated housework?" asked Daisy.

"I sure did," said Kate; "why, I used to wake up in the night to hate it!"

"If you could have belonged to a canning club, and raised tomatoes or peas or corn, and sold the crop,

canning what you could of it, and competed for prizes, and maybe received a free trip to the state capital, and probably to Washington—and had your own bank account, and lots of meetings, and instructions in the work—would that have helped?"

"Why," Kate hesitated as if considering, "why, I think these things would have been fine! Anything—oh, lord, anything—to make things sociable, and sort of human!"

"And, when you were in school in Fairview, if there had been a graded school, such as we have now, with several teachers, and many pupils, and classes in cooking, sewing, gardening and the like—and everything planned to make you think of the problems of farm life as things to be worked out and improved—don't you believe," asked Daisy, "that it would have made things more interesting?"

Kate looked the question over doubtfully. "Well," said she, "a little schooling went a long ways with me, and a little farming a darned long ways. But maybe I could have seen something in them. I don't know."

"But if you had had socials in the schoolhouse, and all the people of the neighborhood there to talk things over, with maybe people there from town, and a dinner, cooked and served by the girls, and a general good time—wouldn't you have found fun in that?"

"Yes," said Kate, "I see what you mean. A live place instead of a dead one. I'm lively, myself; and I used to like things clean and lively at the same time. God knows there ain't any fun in the meanness people

get into while they're hitting things up. It's the hitting it up that's fun. Yes, I can see that if you have all these things, a girl such as I used to be might be happy here. And I might not have been so infernal dumb in my studies. I was good in geography for a while, and I used to be the best reader in school, until I got sore at everything. And speak pieces—why, I was a shark at it!"

"Well," said Daisy, looking over at me as if she was opening a new move, "suppose we had had a regular Little Country Theater here, with our regular presentation of plays—plays written by farmer folks for farmer folks; not the feverish plays of the cities, but real studies, even though a little crude, of our own life by folks like us——"

"Oh, that would be out of sight!" cried Kate. "Say, do you know, my greatest ambition has been to act? There is a man—I may as well tell you, he's the feller that owns this car I slipped away with from town—that thinks he can get me into the movies! He says I have the most expressive face! But I suppose it's bunk like everything they tell you!"

"I've just come back," said Daisy, "from a trip to Minnesota and North Dakota, where they are beginning to have these things. I saw in both states real plays written by farm boys and girls, and played by companies of farm people. I never saw such interest in any dramatic entertainments in my life."

"Are the plays any good?" asked Kate.

"They're the best plays ever written in America!"

cried Daisy. "But I don't suppose your city theatrical men would do anything but jeer at them."

"Not if they leave the Ten Commandments in any kind of shape," said Kate.

"But," said Daisy, "if the audience is a part of every good play, these plays are great. They deal with life. One of them is a play which shows how unhappy a farmer is likely to be when he retires from the farm and goes to town."

"Like Pa," said Kate. "He's about as happy, I suppose, as a brook trout in a sewer."

"They have a Little Country Theater at Fargo," Daisy went on, "and are putting on plays there every season which seem to me to be the beginning of great things. Professor Arvold is the enthusiast behind the movement; but the people of those prairies—they are the movement itself. It started with folk dances and pageants put on by the immigrants—Scandinavians, Germans, Russians, and other nationalities. The great success which started the movement in a big way was a play of old Icelandic life written and put on the stage by the people of a neighborhood, away out on those bleak prairies, who are mainly immigrants from Iceland. And now, in Minnesota, under the leadership of Estelle Cook, and in North Dakota under Arvold, a new literature, and a new stage art is growing up, as distinctive as one can find anywhere in the world."

"So that's what you meant by art?" I inquired.

"Yes, Uncle Abner," said she. "The art we have bungled in the past—the painting, the crayon pictures,

and the other things of which you spoke the other day, and most of our generally futile business of music lessons, are pathetic strivings on the part of the little girls and their parents to give them something in the way of 'accomplishments.' Little bags of tricks, they are, for the girls to use in proving to the world and to the young men that they are wonderful girls, and not like other farm girls."

"Little bags of tricks is right," said Kate. "But they don't fool any one."

"But here is a new art," Daisy went on; "an art growing out of life. What do you think, Uncle Abner, of a play telling how a farmer drove his boy away from the farm by sticking to old-fashioned methods, and how the boy went out into the world and made good by the right kind of farming; while his father went on losing money and coming to poverty?"

"It might happen," I admitted, "and then again the old folks might be right, and the boy go broke. But I'd like to see the play, if there is such a one."

"It's a Minnesota play, called *Back to the Farm*," said Daisy; "and we're going to put it on in the assembly room of the schoolhouse as soon as we can get ready. It was written by a farm boy named Merline Shumway for farmer audiences. It is a success—among farmers. I hope it never will be anywhere else; for the worst thing that could happen to these young dramatists is to have commercial success. And Estelle Cook has written another play for the Minnesota cir-

cuit, called *Kindling the Hearth Fire.* It's a good play, too."

"What's it about?" inquired Kate.

"About the life you ran away from, and how to make it better," answered Daisy. "Cecil Baker, a North Dakota farm boy, has written *A Bee in a Drone's Hive*—that's the retired farmer play; and *The New Liberator* is another rural play of the North Dakota school, dealing with the marketing problem—I don't know who wrote that. The rural credit question is presented in a North Dakota drama entitled, *The Prairie Wolf.* The people of the farming districts are crazy about them, because they know what they are about."

"*Gammer Gurton's Needle,*" said Frank, "and *Ralph Roister Doister* over again."

"And Marlowe and Shakespeare over again, too, perhaps," said Daisy. "When thirty million people whose expression of their own life has been suppressed for centuries start expressing themselves nobody can tell what great things may come of it—if they can only escape the blight of New York!"

"They don't sound very thrilling to me," said Kate; "but for hicks, maybe they are just the thing. And I'd give all my old shoes if I was a hick again—the kind of hick you seem to be making these days. I really must be going."

"Won't you come out Friday night to help us start this thing?" asked Daisy; "or at least to learn more

about it? Maybe there's a place for you in Fairview yet."

"Who, me?" replied Kate, with one of her laughs. "No, I'm much obliged. It's too late for Fairview to get me. I'm going back to the drone's hive."

"Won't you stay to supper?" urged Daisy.

"No, thanks," said Kate. "I'm just as much obliged, but I must be going. I suppose you think it's funny, me dropping in on you this way; but I drove out on impulse, and seeing this little ranch here, and the new church, I thought I'd stop and see what kind of folks you new workers in the vineyard really are. You are all right! I wish you'd been here ten years ago. Good-by! Good-by, Uncle Abner!"

"You've helped me greatly," said Daisy.

"And I don't know," said Kate, "but you've helped me. I guess you have."

After she went away in her cloud of dust, we talked her over, forgetting the girl crop in our interest in the fate of one spear that looked more like cheat than wheat. Daisy insisted that Kate was not a bad girl, but just a wild and wayward one, and Frank agreed with her. I felt some doubts; though as a matter of fact, while I have known several dullards of the Lutz breed, never one of them had been crooked. As it turned out, we were to hear more of Kate in the days to come.

This incident was really the beginning of our neighborhood work along the lines of the Minnesota and North Dakota ideas. The rest of the story is written

in the lives of our people themselves—especially the young folks. Not that the plays themselves are so awfully epoch-making, but the thought that we can make our own plays; and perhaps our own poetry, pictures, statues, and histories some time is a wonderful thing. Really the word "thought" is too strong. We do these things without thinking, and most of all without thinking of fame, as Harriet Bohn used always to be doing when she wrote verses before Isaiah married her. She says as much herself. Maude Ackerman wrote several stanzas of verse for a corn festival we put on last summer, and mixed her own poetry up with Whittier's *Corn Song* and that part of *Hiawatha* that deals with the corn myth—and never thought of what Whittier or Longfellow would have thought of the lines she made. I tell you it was a pretty sight to see a lot of little girls and boys dressed up to imitate ears of corn giving a regular little cantata all about the crops. It made us feel proud—and when a fellow from Chicago asked Maude for a copy of her verses she found that she hadn't saved them! He said that Shakespeare was just that careless about his poems and plays.

I haven't got to the bottom of this thing yet. It is much more important to the girls than it seems. It has loosened our tongues so that we can talk and write indirectly about things that embarrass us when we try to approach them directly. We are getting a little less tongue-tied about sentimental things—but I can see that I shall never make myself understood or make you

see how the new movement is rendering life pleasanter for the girls of Fairview. A talk I had with Marian may make it plain—if it does not I shall have to give it up.

"What do you think of farm life?" I asked.

"Why—I don't know," said Marian.

"If Clyde Bohn decides to go into the Farmers' Exchange Bank," said I, "will you be glad or sorry?"

We still maintain the custom in our part of the country of almost never speaking of engagements. Our parents never did. They kept it a profound secret, usually even from their parents, though the boy might tell his best boy friends, and the girl might take one or two girls into her confidence; but the rest of the world was supposed to be absolutely ignorant that courtship, no matter how open or obvious, was about to result in marriage. A young man would sit up with a young woman until two in the morning twice a week for a year; and when the time came for them to wed, they would slip off in a semi-elopement and come home after a day or so to find the house full of cakes and pies, and her mother in tears. And there was an infare at the groom's home, too, as a general thing. My wife and I ran off in this way, although there was absolutely no reason why we should not have celebrated our wedding with any sort of pomp——

I believe I have it! The American farmer of past days, having lost through pioneer life the knowledge of how the wedding should properly be celebrated, or through mingling of nationalities finding himself con-

fronted by the embarrassments of a difference of customs in the traditions of the families concerned, adopted the clandestine way of getting married, to avoid the dilemmas and complexities of doing it according to any code of social usage. We of the elder day were always embarrassed in the presence of any necessity for ceremonious social observance—and it is a good deal the same way in the country yet. Perhaps this fact gets close to the reason why the most abandoned poets and other writers are found among our reserved northern races—they prove that reserved races and reserved people are not thereby shown to be cold. Marian blushed at my question; but she answered it fairly.

"I shall be satisfied either way," said she. "Whatever is best for Clyde will be best for me; and I think that he is making up his mind that he can do better on the farm than in a little country bank. So I think I shall vote for life on the farm. It's so much better than it used to be before Fairview got to be a 'model neighborhood,' you know."

Then she threw her arms about my neck, kissed me, and asked me if I loved her. Why was that? I ask you. Why, it was because she was glad to have her romance brought out in the light and treated by her old grandpa as a serious matter, a thing of consequence. Probably girls are like that; and it would be better for our rural life if we made more of their weddings, their preparations for mating, the greatest thing of their lives. That is why the girls are happier when the neighborhood

gives itself over to the expression of itself in verses, plays and pageants. It has been a distinct loss to our American country life, this long abandonment of ceremony and observance. We must build it up again. So I thought that night as I pondered over this almost accidental conversation between Marian and myself. I made up my mind I would talk the matter over with Daisy and Maude.

If girls live so much in their affairs of the heart, why should not these matters be made much of, and magnified in ceremony, announcement, festivities, and every feature which can lift betrothal and wedding into importance in the neighborhood life? Wouldn't these things in themselves give to that life more of the light that never was on land or sea? Wasn't the life of the farm girl suffering from suppression of romance? Weren't we socially too cynical, too afraid of letting ourselves go, too tongue-tied when it came to things tender and intimate; too inarticulate? Couldn't we make life for the girls more attractive if we searched for the things prized by them in those secret dramas of which Daisy spoke; and tried our best to put the orange blossoms and veils into the lives of our girls? It was worth thinking of.

I couldn't get much out of Marian, who is troubled with the congenital Dunham dumbness as to the things of the soul; and I went about wondering how a research worker of the sort that have once or twice come to Fairview to earn doctor's degrees by tabulating us, would or could go about making a survey of things

invisible, impalpable, inarticulate—the things that, according to Daisy, determine the state of the girl crop. Of course he couldn't tabulate or analyze it; but he could tell with much dullness how a few country teachers under the leadership of a Tennessee hill-billy named Tom Whelpley, collaborating with a country preacher and his wife, have successfully introduced pageantry, drama, stagecraft, poetry, and painting into a Corn-Belt farm neighborhood, to the considerable benefit—they all use that word "considerable"—of the society. He would get close to the real results by showing that the girls and women have their minds so full of local things in which they take pride and feel a real interest, that they begin to feel a superior sort of pity for their town friends who don't really amount to much in the cities. He would also trace this movement back to North Dakota and Minnesota, where the plays I have mentioned, and many others—for of course there are not yet in existence enough native and country-born rural plays to meet the demand—have been played to standing room only and with immense success in country schoolhouses with blankets for curtains and barn lanterns for footlights. We have a real stage—a little one, to be sure—which Tom Whelpley designed when the new consolidated schoolhouse was built. And the plays are really bully. Lots of folks come out from town to see them, and pay their good money for tickets, expecting to see a Cherry Sisters show, and remaining to praise. I'd rather see one of these pieces any time than *East Lynne* or *The Two*

*Orphans.* Adolph Tulp, who is, of course, scene painter, stage carpenter, and a watchful waiter for a German dialect part, tells me that in a few years we shall have the Passion Play of Oberammergau in second place. "Nod," says he, "mit superstition, but mit the soul of America in trama! Excursions vill gome!"

Daisy has taken pains to tell me that the new dramatic movement isn't the whole of the campaign for making a better girl crop, and one that will stay on the ground, but is only symbolical of it, and a part of it. She says that the girls and women represent the soul of society more than it is represented by the boys and men; and that it isn't money, nor fashion, nor good works, nor success that they want, but the chance to be whole women and entire girls. Maybe there's something in it. My wife says there is, and so do most of the women.

Ethel Fisher—she that was Ethel Wyatt—has written a one-act play for our Little Country Theater, called *The Glory of the Soil,* which deals with the redemptive power of the love of nature. It is pretty sentimental, from what I hear of it. Marian, my little granddaughter, is working on Jeff Sharpe's story, which she has put into a full four-act play, under the title of *The Book-Farmer.* That's going to be a corking play if she can do as good a job on the first two acts as she has on the last two. She is writing the play backward, because she says that if she can handle the English scene she can do the rest easily.

But the sensation of our theatrical history — our

knockout — is to be the one we shall put on next Christmas week, written by Mr. and Mrs. O. Geoffrey Sharpe. I don't know what its name is; but it will have a German dialect part in it for Adolph Tulp, and a star part for Kate Lutz.

Yes, the Lutzes are with us again. So are the Ackermans. The second Ackerman girl takes a place in the teaching force, and Kate is just going to live with her folks. I sold John Ackerman his lot in the little civic center which is springing up about the schoolhouse and the church, and Abel Bohn sold one to Herman. They will live in their new houses and oversee their farms under the management of their sons. Kate is doing any work Daisy asks her to do, and is mighty busy. I wouldn't put it past Daisy to try to make a match between Kate and Adolph Tulp—both German, or of German descent, you know, but loyal Americans, and rather fond of each other already.

Well, why not? Kate would make Adolph happy, and Adolph could be happy with her if she could only keep him at work idealizing her. If I were to write a play, I'd like to take Kate's case as typical of the wrong thing in the girl life of rural America, and call it *A Butterfly without Flowers*. Not a bad title, is it? But pshaw; I couldn't write a play—the neighbors would laugh their fool heads off.

## CHAPTER IX

### TACKLING THE MIDGARD SNAKE

ADOLPH TULP, after he reformed and became director of metal-working, carpentry, painting, and manual training in the Fairview Consolidated Rural School; blacksmith, stage carpenter and scene shifter in the Fairview Little Country Theater, and active in the management of the orchestra, as well as art director in general, became a pretty influential man with us—especially after he read his essay, *German Kultur, a Spiritual Poison.* Any person may become influential in any community who will work willingly and intelligently at anything useful, ask for nothing, and bring to the melting pot an occasional ingot of thought.

Adolph believed fully that he had been saved from a sot's death by the Reverend Frank Wiggins, and Frank's attitude toward community service was such as to give Adolph the impression that he had been saved for and on behalf of the common good, primarily, and for his own soul's sake secondarily; and in this he was not far wrong. Frank thinks, anyhow, that the two things are the same—but he is a heretic. Adolph became to our settlement a sort of devoted valet, body-servant, and general utility man, like one of the old slaves of romance, who died thankfully in the service

of his master, and could not be driven off. Won't it be a fine thing for the world when every community has a population made up of such people? Probably the millennium, when it comes, will creep upon us unsuspected in the work of a host of such humble public servants.

Adolph's pet vanity, in spite of his radicalism, has been that his people in Germany are tenants of one of the Kaiser's farms. "Not effery farmer," he was wont to say, "can be a tenant to the Emperor. He must be a good farmer; and if he is he will find the Kaiser a good landlord." The fact that the tenant of Wilhelm the Accursed must be a good farmer seems to be what roused Adolph's pride.

Now, my wife is a landlord. I am not. I have always worked my own farm, largely with the labors of my own hands—though I would gladly keep more hired help than I do if I could get good men. My wife's land is a hundred and twenty acres, which she got in the division of her mother's estate, and lies three-quarters of a mile west of our farm—too far for economical cultivation from the home place; and anyhow, I like to keep my property interests separate from hers. It works better in the family long run. She had been leasing this farm in the ordinary Corn-Belt way for years, when reformed German kultur in the form of Adolph Tulp came in, and in connection with British tradition in Jeff Sharpe conspired to set in motion changes in the relation of landlord and tenant in our parts, which may be very important.

It came through the work of the arithmetic classes

in the school. Tom Whelpley had started in by making the arithmetic pupils prepare inventories of the family property, and this had grown until the school's classes in mathematics and bookkeeping had become the general counting-room force for the neighborhood. Broadly speaking, all our accounts are kept in the school. To be sure, we keep our own books, such of us as bother to do it; but if we want to know just where we stand on the year's work, or on any branch of it, or even on an individual cow or flock of poultry, sheep or hogs, we ask Tom Whelpley's kids, and they tell us—as a class exercise, mind you, and they get credits in their course of study for telling us. It's making our boys and girls into mighty sharp young people in a business way. There are less than half a dozen farms in the district, now, the owners of which won't furnish the data for the classes of the school. They don't seem to want their affairs exposed to the neighbors; but, bless you, every farmer knows pretty well how every other farmer stands financially anyhow, and the fellows who keep their figures dark either have something to conceal, we think, or are ashamed of the fact that they keep no accounts.

School bookkeeping is the finest thing in the world for a farming neighborhood. It is more thorough bookkeeping than any farmer has time to do for himself, and the doing of the work utilizes labor which would otherwise be wasted on made-up problems in books, and turns it into education for all of us—which is really the best product of life, when one comes to

think about it. Any farmer whose accounts are kept in the school can make a financial statement for Dun or Bradstreet on a day's notice—unless the day is Saturday or Sunday; for the counting-room of the school goes on all the year round, just the same as the field studies and the live-stock work.

Now, my wife's tenant was a fellow named Ben Phillips, an honest chap, but we thought not a very good manager. He had been on the place two years, and through the school functions he and his family had made a lot of friends. So my wife was vexed when he came around in December and said he couldn't pay his rent.

"Why not?" inquired my wife. "Crops have been good, haven't they?"

"Yes," said Ben, "but I had to pay high prices for steers to feed, and the price of beef cattle was off when I shipped. I practically gave my labor to the packers, and got half-price for the corn I fed and the concentrates I bought. Then, you know, I lost some hogs with cholera before the county agent took up vaccinating them, and that threw me back. Things have gone against me, Mrs. Dunham."

Well, under American tenant systems the landlord is supposed to get the highest rent he can and send the tenant packing to another farm if he fails to pay. I was surprised to learn from Jeff Sharpe that this system is what in Britain is called by the horrible name of rack-renting. We have been rack-renting our tenants as much as we can from time immemorial in the

Corn Belt, and all the time awfully sorry for the Irish, the Poles and other peasants of rack-rented Europe! Once an Irish drill sergeant gave the command, "Prisint Arms!" to an awkward squad. They came up in all shapes. "Hivins!" he shouted, "what a prisint! Three steps forard, about face, and take a look at yoursilves!" About facing to take a look at ourselves is a good thing once in a while, and we did it; and I hope we took at least one step forward.

The longer I live and farm the more clearly I see that we American farmers are living under conditions of unregulated and abnormal development. Let me try to tell you what I mean. My brother in Moline, a doctor, once proved to me that the human body doesn't need the vermiform appendix—which is the little rinktum that gets diseased when we have appendicitis. He claimed in this explanation that the vermiform appendix is all that is left of some extra stomach which our ancestors had when they were beasts—a stomach for water such as camels possess, or a storage stomach for grass, or something like that; I forget the exact theory. As we developed into human beings that stomach shriveled up and became vestigial, and now is good for nothing, but is a fine summer home for germs.

Doctor Faville told us the other day at our regular schoolhouse meeting that the upper part of the lungs are little used because we are descended from some being like a bird (instead of a cow or a camel!) that used more lung space than we do, and this upper story

is the attic which has become abandoned in the process of development. He pleased the young women-folks very much by asserting that tight lacing actually cuts down the amount of pulmonary consumption among women, because this method of dressing forces the air into the upper parts of the lungs by shutting up the lower parts. Anyhow, it seems to be a fact that these upper nooks and corners of the lungs are the favorite starting-place of tuberculosis, and maybe the difficulty of filling them with air and the lack of necessity for so doing may have had something to do with this peculiarity of the disease. It seems to be one of the penalties of evolution that the organs of which the animal is slowly ridding itself are not only not useful for a few million years, but are actually a source of danger and evil.

Now the whole business of farm landlordism and tenantry has grown up in new phases within a generation or so. We all know, of course, that the early patrons and great grantees of the crown tried to start American life off in the American colonies on a basis of feudal tenure; but it didn't work. The people kicked the feudal landlords out and proceeded to build up a landlordism of their own, which is probably far worse in many respects than the system they fought against. But I am no historian, and I feel that I am getting in over my head; so I had better illustrate my point of maldevelopment in land tenure by our own experience right here in the Fairview settlement.

We have always had more or less tenant farming,

even when land was so cheap as to be almost free. Before I was married I rented a farm for two or three years. I rented on shares. In those days the landlord's share was one-quarter of the crop. It was better for me to give a quarter of the crop to Foster Wendell than to buy land for myself; especially as I had insufficient money wherewith to buy. I could have earned almost as much by working out by the month, but I had horses, a wagon and some plows, and by using these I was to that extent a capitalist as well as a laborer, and I received a return for my capital. I had some live stock, too, and could keep them on the roughage and other unsalable feed, and thus get more and more of a start against the time when I should buy a farm of my own. Tenant farming was a very convenient intermediate stage between laboring for wages and owning a farm. As for the landlord, he got a small return on the small price he paid for the black prairie soil and something for his labor of breaking it up, building a small house and some sorry buildings and fences. If he asked for more than this the tenant would quit, and either go to work by the month after selling off his stuff, or would buy a farm, or move on west and become a squatter, or, after a few years, take up a claim under the homestead law. He had no cinch on the tenant, and the rent was no real burden. Soon, of course, rent went up to a third of the crop, and hung there a long time. Then it began to take a lot of money to equip and carry on a farm, and all kinds of lease systems grew up under which the land-

lord furnished more of the capital and took more of the returns.

In the beginning of our leasing system—if it can be called a system—few tenants wanted to bind themselves for a longer time than one year. Usually the owner either desired to return to the place himself in a year or so, or the tenant had in mind getting a place of his own very soon. There was no question involved of keeping up fertility. We thought at that time that manure was a bad thing for our land. The fertility seemed inexhaustible. Straw was not saved. On the contrary, we bucked it off from the tail of the threshing machine with a pole drawn by a horse, and when the machine moved away, burned it to get rid of it. It became a motto that it was cheaper to move the barn than haul the manure away from it—and considering the fact that most of our "barns" were straw stables with a substructure of poles obtained from the timber along the nearest river, moving them when the manure got three to five feet deep was an easy matter. Happy was the farmer who lived on the bank of a stream, so that he could throw the manure, now so precious, down to a point where it would be washed away by freshets.

Thus our whole system of agriculture was based on the mining of the soil and the neglect of fertility. As years went by most farm owners, but by no means all of them, saw the necessity of soil maintenance and adopted methods of keeping the manure for the land; but our tenant system was too firmly established to be

changed in the same direction to any great extent—and our soil is still rather rich. The one-year lease persisted; and why should a tenant for one year bother to husband straw, haul out the manure, keep live stock, and especially buy and feed rich concentrates on the place, when in the nature of things it takes several years for the farmer to get the full benefits of these things? If the tenant farmer is a bad soil manager it is a good deal more the fault of the landlord than of the tenant. These things must be understood before one can see the full problem which confronted my wife and me when Ben Phillips defaulted in his rent, and his case was taken up, first by Tom Whelpley, the schoolmaster; and then by Adolph Tulp, the German, and Jeff Sharpe, the Britisher.

My wife is a good business woman, and, like most women, conservative. That is, she sticks to custom. Her idea of the relation of landlord and tenant was that when the tenant does not pay the rent it is only business to collect the sum if possible; and in any case send him away and lease the land to another better able to carry out the contract of lease. Otherwise, she held, she was merely contributing to the support of an unsuccessful man's family, to whom she was under no obligation, moral or legal. She is not a hard-hearted woman, but she lives up to her ideals both in business and charity; and she does not mingle the two. And I must say that she and I have agreed pretty well. We agreed when she told Ben Phillips that he would have

to sell something and pay her, or give security for the debt and get off the farm.

"It isn't right," said he—which shows that the new life of the neighborhood had been giving him some advanced ideas—"I'll need all I have on any new place I go to. I have been trying to make the farm richer instead of poorer, because it only seems right—and we like the neighborhood and always meant to stay on the place as long as we could. And I don't like to go to another farm crippled in things to do with."

"Well," said my wife, "I'm sorry, but I've made my plans for that rent money, and I must have it. You could have had the place as long as you paid the rent; but I surely don't owe you anything for farming it well. You did that for your own interest, not mine."

"I've hauled a thousand loads of manure," said Ben, "in the three years I've worked your farm. The land will bring better crops for years on account of that. The next tenant will get the benefit. Why, I've bought the richness of lots of that manure in oil-cake and cottonseed meal for my cattle. It don't look right for me to lose it."

"Did you buy the oil-cake or cottonseed meal for the cattle or the land?" I asked.

"I bought it for the cattle," said Ben. "But all the profits went into the manure. I'd get back what I've lost on feeding, or a part of it, if I could farm that land while the strength of the manure lasts. It may be legal, but it ain't right."

My wife couldn't see that there was a lick of sense in what he said, and stuck by her guns. I couldn't see what other business course was open to her, but I could see plainly enough that the next tenant would be able to pay his rent more easily, or, for the matter of that, to pay a higher rent on account of what Ben had done. Really, we could sell Ben's fertility to another man, after collecting his rent in full from him. It made me a little uneasy in my conscience—but there was the law, and there was the custom. And law and custom, I find, when sifted to the bottom, generally have reason back of them. Sometimes, as in this case, they have the reason of a past age behind them rather than the reason of to-day. Then they are vermiform appendixes and unused lung tracts in our social evolution. That is what I meant a while ago.

I suppose it was three or four days after that when Adolph Tulp came along one Sunday, with his best clothes on, to have one of his rather frequent chats with us. Adolph is a great visitor. He knows something of special interest, seemingly, to any man, woman or child in the neighborhood whom he may happen to meet. This time, however, he was excited. He had a letter in his pocket from his brother in Germany—this was before the war, remember—and a few press clippings, all of which he translated for us.

" 'Ve are all vell,' " ran Adolph's translation, " 'but ve haf had much trouble, from which ve are now happily outcome. It came from the lease of the farm. Our landlord——' "

"He iss the Kaiser," said Adolph, in a tone of deep respect, notwithstanding his radicalism, "but Oscar calls him only 'our landlord.' The Emperor has done wrong in dis!"

"'Our landlord,'" the translation went on, "'in some way became offended, or wished to change the mode of husbandry from our ancient system, and refused to renew our lease.'"

"Dis," said Adolph, "is horrible! Ve haf been on dat farm for almost as long as de Hohenzollerns on der trone."

I thought of Ben Phillips, but it didn't seem quite the same thing. My wife's farm was in America, you know, and the Phillips family hadn't been on it for but three years. Those things appeared to make a difference; for though we felt indignant at the Emperor for sending the Tulp family from their farm, it never occurred to us that it might be as disagreeable to Ben Phillips and his family to be homeless every spring, or even every three years, as for the Tulps in Germany to have to move once in three to five centuries or so. Adolph went on with his letter.

"'To leave the old farm—that, my brother, were worse than death. It is in our hearts, the old farm. It is in our blood, and in our bones. So ve felt; but ve must leave it.'"

My wife looked at me as if to say that the Phillipses couldn't be as fond as that of her farm at any rate.

"'But,'" continued the letter, "'if we could have gone in honor it would have been one thing. It seemed

to be our lot to go in dishonor. That would be another and worse thing. The Emperor not only refused to renew our lease, but it was published as his words that we were to be sent away because we were incompetent farmers!' "

*"Mein Gott!"* exclaimed Adolph. "The Tulps!"

" 'This,' " he read on, " 'we could not endure. So, with much sorrow, but also with much indignation, we sued the Emperor for damages for disturbance of our possession under the lease, and also for libel.' "

Adolph looked at us with a strange mingling of pride and horror.

"The Kaiser!" he hissed. "Damages and also libel. The Tulps!"

"Why," said my wife, "they certainly had their nerve! I should think an Emperor would have the right to take possession of his own farm when the lease expires, to say nothing of common folks. And if I want to say that Ben Phillips is a poor farmer I'll do it!"

"But he issn't!" said Adolph. "Ben Phillips would not in Chermany leave, even though you wass the Kaiserin. Listen!"

" 'It has been a great crisis in our lives,' " the translation proceeded, " 'and we have been grieved at the things published about our suit against the Emperor. But before the case came to trial the Emperor's agents came to us and offered us marks' "—here Adolph stopped to turn marks into dollars—" 'thirty thousand

dollars as damages justly due us for disturbance of our possession——'"

"And you say the lease was up?" inquired my wife.

"Yess," said Adolph, folding up his letter, "and the Kaiser also published a statement—my brother vould not take the thirty thousand dollars otherwise—that the Tulps are good farmers."

"I glory in their spunk," said I. "They certainly put the screws to His Nibs, didn't they?"

"But it's the king, isn't it?" queried my wife.

"Yess," said Adolph, "but the rights of the man who works the farm are also, even in Kaiser-ridden Chermany, somedings."

And he pocketed his letter and went away.

"Well," said my wife, "they needn't talk to me any more about the enslaved peasantry of Europe, if this is a sample of their ways over there. Better get up a movement for the liberation of the enslaved landowners!"

She said this to Tom Whelpley when he and Maude Ackerman stopped in the road, in Tom's little car, and talked to us as we stood by the big cottonwood in front of the house. The Sharpes had been to call on us and were just going away, and we made quite a little group. We were talking of Adolph's new scenery for the Little Country Theater; and speaking of Adolph in those days always led to a discussion of the victory his brother had won over the Kaiser. By this time all the newspapers had printed articles about it. You all re-

member it, no doubt; it was quite a world sensation for a while, this contest between a farmer and the Emperor over the question of a tenant's rights in Germany.

"I wonder," said Tom, "which is better for the landlords, to have people on their lands from generation to generation, farming so well that they will sue even the Emperor if he says they are not good farmers, or to have leases like ours, which, as Henry Wallace says, are criminal conspiracies between landlord and tenant to rob the land?"

"I for one," said my wife, "would be glad to renew my lease every year as long as I could keep that sort of tenant."

She knew he was thinking of Ben Phillips, and that Maude Ackerman was sorry at the prospect of losing Mrs. Phillips and Lizzie, their daughter, from the district.

"Our leases," said Jeff Sharpe, "would create riot and insurrection among the yeomanry of England. Uncle Henry Wallace told us at the Farmers' Week Meetings last winter of an experience he had at the home of a farmer on a two-hundred-and-fifty-acre farm in England on one of his visits to the old country. This man paid a high rent for the land, but lived in fine style, kept carriages and servants, and dined off china and plate. Mr. Wallace asked him when his lease expired. 'It falls in next year,' said the farmer. 'Suppose,' said Uncle Henry, 'that the Duke refuses to renew it? He could do that, I suppose?' 'Yes,' said

the farmer, 'he could; but I'm not afraid of anything of the kind as long as I carry on the farm according to the lease and the laws.' 'You have been making this land richer and richer,' said Uncle Henry, 'and this enrichment has cost you money. What would you do if the Duke should say he wanted the land for another tenant?' 'I should sue him,' replied the farmer, 'for fifteen thousand pounds for disturbance; and I should collect the money. I should make him pay me every penny, according to well-established rules, for the unexhausted fertility which there is in the land on account of my operations. It would cost him dearly. This is a free country, sir, and a tenant can not be robbed by his landlord with impunity. We farmers are not allowed to scourge the fertility out of the land, and should not be; but the laws and customs of the country protect us in our interest in what we have done for the land. Oh, I'm safe enough, sir, as long as I farm well. This is England, you know!' "

"That sounds," said I, "a good deal like Adolph's brother's story. Landlords, Lucy, seem to be an oppressed class in England as well as in Germany."

Jeff drove off with his family, and we invited Tom and Maude in for supper. They alighted rather eagerly, I thought, as if they had been waiting for the invitation. After supper Tom pulled from his pocket some papers, and turning to my wife, said, "Mrs. Dunham, I have had the school class in farm economics make a detailed report on your farm leased to Ben Phillips. Would you like to go over the figures?"

By that time she was a little sensitive on the Phillips matter, but she said she'd be glad to look over the statement. She'd like to find the hole in the skimmer that lost the profits from as good a farm as that. Tom went over the matter item by item. He showed that Ben had bought feeders at about the figure at which I bought mine. They were high, and it turned out that they might have been bought at other times a little lower, but he had bought with average wisdom. His steers were good feeders, too; a little heavier for their ages than mine, and I am considered a good buyer. Ben had fed a good ration, too, and his cattle had made good gains—only a little costlier than the gains on mine; but I had better barns and equipment than my wife had furnished to Ben.

"If the warmth and comfort aren't in the barns, you know," said Tom, "you have to feed warmth and comfort to them in the form of corn."

"I suppose so," assented my wife. "And I s'pose I should put in a thousand dollars or so on top of the rent to make it easier for Ben to make good!"

Well, the upshot of the examination was that they had to give Ben Phillips the credit of having carried on the farm pretty well. Not the best in the way of efficiency, but better than the average. We had to admit that if after paying wages and all the overhead of my own farm that year I had had to pay rent at the same rent charged to Ben Phillips it would have made me scratch to do it.

"And now," said Tom, "we come to the benefits to

the farm of the methods followed by Ben. Suppose," Tom argued, "that we had had the sort of lease that Jeff has told us of; or the sort that Adolph's folks had in Germany; how should we stand with Ben? We should owe him for the unexhausted fertility, which morally belongs to him, enough to pay the year's rent and more."

The kids in school had it all figured out in terms of potash, nitrogen and phosphoric acid, and also in terms of barnyard manure at so much a load.

"Well, darn it!" said my wife, getting nettled, "the tenants in Germany and England have to pay their rent, don't they?"

"Not always," said Tom; and he went on and told how landlords had always done in unfavorable years in the most enlightened of the old countries, and what the law now required of them. "You see," said he, "all these countries have been studying these matters for centuries, and they have found out that there are four parties to every lease—the landlord, the tenant, the public, and the land itself. These laws against rack-renting and disturbance of families in their homes——"

"Their homes!" said my wife sarcastically; "I always kind of thought that hundred and twenty was mine!"

"Unless it's Ben Phillips's home, he is homeless," said Tom. "We used to send money to the Irish Land League because of the evictions. Evictions in Ireland are a thing of the past; but the evicted Irish farmer

was in exactly the condition that Ben Phillips will be in if he has to go to a new place next spring."

"But," said my wife, "the Irish landlords took away the improvements the tenants had made."

"How about the thousand loads of manure Ben has hauled out?" asked Tom. "Isn't that an improvement Ben has made? And won't you take it from him if he goes?"

Neither Lucy nor I had a word to say. And yet it seemed absurd that we had to begin to plan and study and take into account anything besides our rent. If it has come about that a landlord has to look upon himself as a public servant, and subject to all sorts of claims on the part of the land and the tenant and the public, it is a pretty pass indeed for America!

"Over half the families in this district under the year-by-year system of leasing farms," Tom went on, "are homeless every spring. How can we make this a good place in which to live and bring up children if that keeps up? How can we make a good school of the Fairview Consolidated School if more than half of our children come from families that have about as much stability of residence as the guests in a ten-cent lodging house? How can Frank Wiggins make this the ideal community from a religious view-point when half the people in it can drive the other half out of it if they desire to do so, and will if a bad season makes it impossible for the tenant half to pay the rent? It's worse yet in some places. Only one farmer out of four in Texas entirely owns his own farm. There are

314,263 farmers in Texas who are homeless every year so far as the laws are concerned. You say that they are ignorant negroes? Well, how are the negroes ever to be anything but poor and ignorant as long as they have no permanent homes? But only 55,000 of these are negro families; so that there are 259,000 white families in this one state in this condition of economic homelessness. And this is getting worse all the time. You know how fast the farms are going into the hands of renters in this district. I can see how the movement has increased in my short residence here; and in Texas, which is no worse than other states in which I have lived and worked, while the number of farms has increased eighty-three per cent. in the last twenty years, the number of farms owned by the men who work them has increased only fifty per cent., while the tenant farmers have increased one hundred and thirty per cent. It is coming in America, the age of landlordism —it is here. It is here in Fairview. Shall we make it an age of mining the soil and undermining manhood and womanhood, or shall we try to get rid of it in the future; and in the meantime shall we humanize and enlighten it? It is up to you, Aunt Lucy, to decide your part of this great national question right now, and in deciding it to help the movement for better things."

"Better things for who?" said my wife; who knows more about who and whom than she lets on.

"For the country," said Tom. "For the neighborhood. For the school. For the church. For humanity.

For God. For the land. For the tenants. For the landlords themselves."

This was quite an outburst for Tom, who as a rule doesn't resemble the earthquake, or the whirlwind, but contents himself with being the still small voice. We were impressed. Maude Ackerman looked at Tom with tears in her eyes. Lucy sat mute; and I pulled out my jack-knife and looked for something to whittle. Not finding anything, I shut it up and put it in my pocket. To lower the discussion to a plane on which we would all feel more at ease, though we were sure to feel the force of Tom's appeal, I suggested that if he would address his remarks to the landlord's side of it we could follow him better.

"No, you can't," said he; "any two people who have done as much splendid and unselfish work for the common good as you two have to your credit can't help following me, and you know it; but I reckon we had better take up the landlord's side. Corn-Belt land is not as rich as it used to be, is it, Uncle Abner?"

"Not near," said I, "except where good farming has kept it up."

"Do you know a farm worked by tenants which is not getting poorer and poorer all the time?"

"No," said I.

"It's the shiftless tenants," said my wife.

"It's the shifting tenants," said Tom; "the tenants that lose when they haul out manure, or feed cotton-seed meal or oil-cake or tankage or anything else bought and fed on the place."

"Well, gosh!" said my wife, who uses these words only when she is sore at herself, "what can I do? I can't give the farm to Ben Phillips for the sake of your old school and Frank's church and the land and the future. What has the future done for me?"

"This Corn Belt," said Tom, "is God's garden. Other gardens have become deserts because people asked what posterity had done for them.

" 'They say the Lion and the Lizard keep
The Courts where Jamshyd gloried, and drank deep,
And Bahram, that great Hunter—the Wild Ass
Stamps o'er his Head, but can not break his Sleep.'

"Our system of tenantry, carried on to its ultimate results, will make Iowa a desert, and reduce Chicago to a wilderness of ruins with a few fishermen holing up in huts quarried from the stones of the Postoffice Building. Do you care?"

"Nonsense!" said Lucy; "but of course I care. I'm just as good an American as you are. And now, seeing that you're so smart, what kind of a lease do you recommend for Ben Phillips; and what about my rent? Shall I give it to posterity?"

"I think you should take your share of the losses, when losses come," said Tom. "But I think you should study the kind of farming that pays best in this community, as shown by our records and the studies of the state college and the Department at Washington, and your own experience, and spend a little time, and if

necessary a little money getting your farm into the profitable class. Then I think you should give Ben a five-year lease."

"I can't do that," said my wife; "my boy is thinking of coming back and taking that farm, and I must keep it free for him."

"Don't make Ben Phillips pay for it, then. If you must let it from year to year, make a lease with Ben which will give him a claim on you for the unexhausted fertility created during his tenancy. And fix it up with him somehow so that he can pay this year's rent on easy terms."

We couldn't find any basis of agreement that day, though we sought earnestly for it. None of us considered then that Ben Phillips and his wife ought to be taken into our councils; but when we finally did so we discovered that they were as desirous as we of protecting my wife's interests. In fact, when they found that we were taking the matter up on broad grounds of the common welfare, their sympathy with that way of approach and their sedulous efforts to resolve every doubt against the tenant and in favor of the landlord were a little touching. As a matter of fact, they hated anything that smacked of charity to them or carried with it any implication that the tenant farmer needs special consideration as a ward of society. Pretty soon we were amused by the spectacle of my wife urging things on them on public grounds and the upkeep of fertility, rather than as favors to them. They were self-respecting people, you know, like most farmers,

whether they own their land or not. Finally, Daisy Wiggins showed us the way out.

"What a splendid subject for study in our meetings this winter!" she exclaimed.

"But we want to know what we are going to do next summer," said Mrs. Phillips. "Ben can get a job on the street cars in the city, we think, and we want to make a sale——"

"Never you mind about the street-car job," said Lucy. "We can fix it right up now, if you want to; but I think it will be better to wait until we get through with Daisy's programme. I'll let Ben use that unexhausted fertility to pay me out, anyhow; and maybe we'll find a better scheme than we can think of now."

So we debated it. Maybe you think we didn't have some warm arguments over that matter. Tenants and landlords, people from town and economists from the agricultural college; with all and sundry we argued it for weeks at the schoolhouse meetings; and Frank Wiggins preached a sermon on the Mosaic land system and the Year of Jubilee. We discussed Economic Rent, Speculative Rent, and the Relations between Rent, Wages and Interest. We had a SingleTax lecture, and a lot of Single Tax speeches. Once the Socialists came out from town and took possession of the meeting, and we had Economic Determinism, the Materialistic Interpretation of History, and the Class Struggle—the two former by a drayman, and the latter by a rich man's son, who was himself an illustration, I thought, of the theory of Class Unconsciousness as opposed to

the one preached by him. We lost all sight of Ben Phillips and my wife's rent. We dug down into the vitals of society.

"Dat iss natural," said Adolph Tulp. "Vunce the god Thor vass out fishing, and caught somedings on his hook dat made earthquakes and volcanoes ven he tried to pull it out. He had hooked the Midgard Snake vich iss wrapped round and round the whole earth, and vich, ven id iss landed, lands the planet with it. Ven ve take hold of the land kvestion ve haf hooked the Midgard Snake. No vunder it makes a disturbance. It iss the kvestion of all kvestions. Ven it iss settled, all iss settled."

Of course, most of us knew better than to work with the theorists. We gave them good things to eat, cooked by the girls of the domestic economy classes as a part of their class work, and charged for them at our regular rates—which may be estimated by the fact that three cents bought a good piece of pie or a sandwich at our evening meetings. Thus we kept even on expenses and sent everybody away satisfied after blowing off their radical steam. We sensible people studied leases. Jeff Sharpe read a paper on British Leasing Systems, and Adolph Tulp explained the German system he knew, and told us all the story of his brother's controversy with the Kaiser, after having told each of us separately. We studied the Christie & Lowe leases at Beardstown, and the Scully leases. We were astonished to discover that the Scully lands, owned by an Irish or British landlord, and many thousand acres in

area, are leased on terms so much more favorable to the tenant than those imposed by our home-grown American landlords that a man who owns a long-term lease of a Scully farm can sell it for several thousand dollars. My wife was a little ashamed to find that a non-resident foreign landlord makes leases which are assets to his tenants, while she had made one with Ben Phillips which was a liability for Ben. We studied the Wadsworth farm system in the Genessee Valley, and the Bookwalter system in Nebraska. Some of them seemed very bad to us, and some pretty good, but none seemed exactly right.

We finally made up our minds that the first and most important step was simply to give Ben a lease which would allow him payment for the unexhausted fertility put into the land by him. Tom Whelpley gave up in despair the plan of getting the American landlord to grant long-term leases, though my wife made one finally with Ben for five years. The provision for payment for the unexhausted fertility on refusal to renew the lease called for settlement on the basis of so much of the barnyard manure remaining at the end of the first year, so much the second, so much for the third, and nothing after that—though it helps for a longer time. We don't use commercial fertilizers much, so nothing was said about them. Allowance was made according to tables we prepared from data furnished us by the colleges, for the enrichment of the manure by the feeding of concentrates, and the use of ground phosphate rock in the stables or otherwise; and as some

of our land is getting acid, a clause was inserted giving pay for lime where used by mutual consent, for five years after its application in a diminishing amount.

"This," said Tom, "is more important than we think. It will give every tenant a hold on his home. If by enrichment of the land he can make it costly for his landlord to send him away, it will result in longer leases, no matter how the lease reads. It is the beginning of a different and better system for the tenant, for the community, for the land, and in the long run, for the landlord. Anyhow, the landlord did not make the land as he made the improvements. All systems of religion recognize, as did the religion of Moses, that the land is not like other objects, a thing which can properly be held in unlimited ownership. 'The land shall not be sold forever,' said our religion in its earliest days, 'for the land is mine, saith the Lord.' The landlord's interests must be first those of the community, and second those of a taker of rent.

"Now, how will this little thing, the giving to the tenant the ownership in the goodness of the land which he has made, affect things? How would it affect the tenure of the land as between Mrs. Dunham and Mr. Phillips? At the end of five years this lease will terminate. If Mrs. Dunham desires, she can send Mr. Phillips away; but in the meantime he can confidently proceed to build up the land in fertility. If she sends him away she must pay him for the fertility he has left on hand in the soil. It will be to his interest to put in

as much as possible; for if he stays it will make him prosperous as a farmer, and if he goes it will be as good as money in the bank. This will make for better farming. It will also force the landlord to invest actual money in a new tenant in exchange for the old, whom she can keep for nothing. The better the tenant the more it will cost to get rid of him. Soon, if this system is adopted, the tenant farmer in America will hold from decade to decade, and from generation to generation, as in the old world. This is the first step toward that same stable land tenancy which surprised us when we learned of it through the experience of the Tulp family in Germany, and the things Uncle Henry Wallace saw in England. It is a start toward what all enlightened peoples have found necessary as a means of keeping landlordism from ruining the nation. It is the next best thing to the abolition of landlordism itself."

Actually, and all reform hot air aside, this thing is important. Ben Phillips is a better tenant than ever, and other landowners are beginning to copy the lease. And I don't for a moment suppose that this timid step toward a better land system will be the last. The Fairview Idea, however, is that rural life can't stand still. That way lies anything but good American progress. I am, of course, a stand-patter—called that, anyhow—but if Moses found it necessary to give back the land every fifty years to the families that originally owned it, I don't think a man can be called a wild-eyed fanatic

if he looks our land system over and sees what can be done to prevent all the land from going into the hands of those who never work land, and all the work of farming to those who never own land. Furthermore, I don't like laboring to build up a socialized community in Fairview and have it all shot to rags every spring by the moving in and moving out of tenant farmers. I want them to stay until we can build them solidly into the neighborhood like good concrete. Ben Phillips's folks, now—they are almost as firmly fixed in their community niche as if they owned that hundred and twenty outright. That's the way we like to see it. After all it is only common sense and enlightened patriotism on our part. Peonism and peasantry don't pay.

That's the way we are beginning to look at the tenantry matter in Fairview; but we are only a little community. What we do is of small consequence, even to us, in this struggle with the Midgard Snake, whose folds encircle the world. Some one has said that small causes in the field of political economy not only can not produce large effects, but produce no effects at all. An idea, however, is never a small thing if it be germinal. We in Fairview are doing our little, even though what we do be mistakenly done, in the faith that the idea of making an attack on the great question of land tenure is likely to be a germinal one, and therefore not a small thing.

It is a question for you, oh, ye millions of town-dwellers who own so many of the farms of America,

to say what you will do to save the land in its richness, to save the nation in its integrity, to save our returning soldiers, to save the nation from you yourselves!

The Midgard Snake is on your hook!

## CHAPTER X

### UNCLE SAM IN FAIRVIEW

I HAVE come to the end of these sketches of the history of recent changes in rural life in Fairview. I can't finish, however, without telling something of our experience with Uncle Sam's farming missionary, the county agent. I suppose I have delayed in speaking of this, because I have been depicting the Fairview Idea; and we can't claim the county agent as a part of that. In fact, we are not very proud of our original attitude toward the county agent. You may remember that the Reverend Frank Wiggins tried hard to have us hire one early in the movement, and had Tom Whelpley offered as his candidate for the job. I was responsible, in the main, for having Tom rejected by the farmers—and then Frank turned on me and got Tom elected to the position of Principal of the Fairview Consolidated Rural School, in which position he has heaped coals of fire on our heads by making that school the best in the state, we think, and winning renown all over the nation as the master of a prize rural school, in which teaching is, from the first day to the last, and in all branches, knit into the life of the community.

Altogether it was a fine thing for us that we re-

jected the county-agent stone, that it might become the head of the corner in our educational edifice; and I wish to predict here and now that at some time not far in the future all really progressive communities will have the A B C of farming to which the county agents now so largely devote themselves, taught in the rural schools. So, as a matter of fact, we accidentally took a leap into the better by-and-by when we put that work into the Fairview Consolidated Rural School—where it belongs.

But, though the county agent is not a part of the Fairview Idea, it is a part of that idea to make the best possible use of good things—like the Little Country Theater of North Dakota, and the rural drama of that state and Minnesota—no matter whether they originate with us or not. And the county-agent movement in the United States is too big and revolutionary a function of the national government to be ignored by any community which is trying to march forward, and is even half-way open-minded.

I wonder how many readers of this story know how big, how vital, and how potent a thing for growth the county-agent movement is? I wonder if there are not a lot of them who are very hazy in their minds as to what it is, even in a general way? How many know that the United States Government, through the Department of Agriculture, sends missionaries of skilled farming, salesmen of agricultural prosperity into any county in the United States which fulfils the conditions, pays a part of his salary, if the state and

county will pay the rest, hires state managers to keep these men in the field and see that they do good work, and that after these men are on the ground they become active organizers of better agriculture, working with and for the farmers, instead of on them, and becoming in fact County Superintendents of Agricultural Education under United States Government and State Agricultural College Management? Many know these things, but few save farmers who have actually worked with these farm experts know them as one of the great and growing things in our new rural life. Few know that out of the twenty-five hundred or three thousand counties in the United States, nearly half, including all those which are not farming counties, already had these salesmen of good farming prior to that great quickening which came with the great war. Yet such is the fact; and now there is a county agent in almost every rural county.

As I have said, we felt that we knew more about farming in this county than any pin-feathered kid from an agricultural college could know. You see we misunderstood these kids, and also the attitude of the county agent toward the farmers. We thought he was coming out to do things for or to us. Really, the agents do things with us and become community hired men who perform a lot of work that we all have long known to be good and even necessary, but which men can not do alone. Take Freeman Clay's chinch-bug campaign, for instance. But I must tell you about that.

It grew out of our ignorance or lack of practise in growing wheat. Not that we oldsters weren't veterans in wheat growing. We all went broke on wheat in the sixties and seventies, when these prairies fed the world with bread. Then we grew spring wheat exclusively. We used to break the prairie sod in April and May of one year, and sow it to wheat the next spring. We knew of no crop which would grow on the freshly-broken sod; and we thought the furrow-slice, a long ribbon of black earth, had to lie and rot for one season before it would make a crop of anything. To be sure, we used to plant corn in holes chopped through the sod with an ax, but sod-corn was the synonym for nothing much. Also, we raised our winter's potatoes, turnips, pumpkins and squashes on the new sod, and scant crops of buckwheat for our winter's cakes; but nothing of much value in money. What we grew helped us to exist, and that is about all.

After the earliest flight of pioneers had roughed it through, the later comers found that they could grow a crop of flax right after the breaking-plow, and made good money on it; and further west many a man paid for his land with the first crop of flax. Then, in Western Canada, the landowners became wise to this possibility, and sold the land on the basis of a crop the first year, so that the new knowledge was capitalized in the price of land—just as all knowledge, new or old, inevitably becomes so capitalized sooner or later. It's the law of land values.

After the first crop of wheat, which was the second

year of plowing, we sowed another crop of wheat, and then another, and another, and so on. The Corn-Belt prairies were golden seas, rippling in the sunshine and the winds—a magnificent sight, as different from the Corn-Belt summer landscape of to-day as Alaska is different from Florida. It was black soil in fall and spring—bare black soil as far as the eye could reach. It was the faint green of sprouting grain in April, deepening into lush greenery in May and June, now beginning to wave in dark ripples in the wind. It was green and gold in July. And in August the great self-rake reapers, and the old Buckeye droppers, the Marsh Harvesters, each with two men binding and riding at the same time, and the headers spouting geysers of wheat heads into great board boxes. And then the prairie became speckled with shocks, which soon gathered into groups of hive-shaped stacks, after which the threshers went about filling the air, from daylight till after dark, with the hum of the cylinders, rising and falling like the voice of no other machine, in a long, wavering, musical pæan of triumphant plenty: and then came the days of burning straw-piles, and the stubble-fields again scored with broadening black ribbons of plowed land, broadening until all was black again, and the wagons wore deep grooves in the earth as the crop went to the railway, sometimes as much as forty miles off. And then in the spring there went into these fields another crop of wheat.

Not for too long a time, however, would nature allow this to go on. There came a time when something

mysterious was seen to be the matter with the wheat. It came up as rank as ever, it grew as tall as ever, its heads were as long as ever, but the straw which used to turn to gold from green now bore black specks, and turned brash so that the heads would pull off the bands when we cinched up the sheaf before tucking it in. Sometimes, too, our boots would be red with rust from the wheat straw, and at others the wheat would stand shoulder-high and filled with kernels when some terrible thing would shrivel the grain almost to chaff.

We waded through deep waters in those days. Nobody knew what the trouble was, though we had all sorts of theories. Now, the professors in the colleges of the spring-wheat states have found out that when wheat is sown after wheat, as we sowed it, there are fungi and bacteria and blights which fill the soil and pervade the country. But though we suffered from them we did not know they existed. Nobody knew then. Such knowledge belongs to the age of the college of agriculture and the county agent.

We quit growing wheat, finally, and corn became our great crop. Then our states became the Corn-Belt states. Now one may see as much corn as then we saw of wheat. It is as beautiful as the wheat, but it is different. Not warned by nature's protest against a one-crop system, we planted corn after corn. And recently we have begun to see that this, too, is a mistaken policy. Then wheat came back; but this time it was not spring wheat. In my young manhood here in the Corn Belt we had no winter wheat which would resist

the severities of our winters. But twenty-five years or so ago, Russian immigrants brought to Kansas varieties of winter wheat which are more hardy; and these have gradually made their way north until they are now grown in Alberta, where the season is so short that this year's harvest must be taken off after next year's seed is sown—thus making wheat after wheat impossible. This wheat has been perfected by the plant-breeders of the colleges, until it is better than when the Russian immigrants brought it over. It brought wheat back to Fairview. We began slowly to adopt the Ohio Valley rotation of corn, then wheat, then clover. Some such change seemed necessary.

Now this new system found us all out of practise in wheat growing. We had never been much troubled with chinch-bugs, and not at all to speak of with the Hessian fly; but now both these pests were upon us. About the time that I, at least, had come to the conclusion that I had forgotten a lot about wheat, and that there was another lot I had never known, a county agent was hired for our county. We in the Fairview neighborhood took very little interest in him and his work. We thought we had in Tom Whelpley and the school, and in Frank Wiggins and Daisy his wife, and the Fairview Meeting House, a good deal more than the county agent could give us in the way of aids to rural progress. We were, perhaps, a little uppish and conceited in the matter.

But the county agent didn't feel that way about us. In fact, he disarmed us by coming to our meetings

every Sunday and levying on Tom and Frank for help in his work. He said that it was not often that a county agent came to a county in which his work was so well started in an influential neighborhood. If he could just get the Fairview spirit, and the Fairview Idea, he said, spread all over the county, he would consider his work there a success.

Now, what can you do against that sort of approach? Nothing but to turn in and help. And after a while we discovered that not even a Tom Whelpley knows everything, and that the keen young fellow who is making a business of gobbling up every bit of new knowledge as soon as it is knowledge, is sure to be a few laps ahead of the best of us, except in the general and old-established practises of farming, in which, of course, we old stagers naturally know more than anybody else.

The county agent's name was Freeman Clay. He wasn't so very youthful, after all, though we called him disparagingly a kid. He had an office in the courthouse at the county seat, and kept a little road-louse of a car, in which he burned up the highways of the county all summer long. On Saturdays he was in his office, and the farmers and their wives and children, too, got in the habit of dropping in to see him pretty often. I understand this is the way most of these fellows do. Going from farm to farm, as he did, he kept posted on matters of interest, and the first favor he did me was to tell me where I could get three brood sows of the breed I like best, and which I wanted. He sold fifty

dollars' worth of seed corn for Wilson Beebe, because Wilson's boy had been taught in school how to select it, save it, and test it; and it was a good variety of corn. He organized boys' and girls' clubs all over the county, and used to come in his little car and take Tom Whelpley ten or fifteen miles about every week, to tell some backward neighborhood how much good we had got out of some community function in Fairview. He was always organizing parties of visitors to attend our Fairview meetings, and localities which still had only the old-fashioned one-room schoolhouses began to simmer with the Fairview ferment. He always carried a book with him in which he set down notes of anything any farmer wanted to buy or had to sell. He was a sort of universal sales agent and commission man, with the commission eliminated. It wasn't long before every farmer in the county would stop at the turnrow by the road and wait if he saw the dust of Clay's gasoline bug approaching.

I did that one day, and complained when Clay arrived that the chinch-bugs, after ruining my wheat had attacked the outer rows of corn.

"Too bad," said he. "I'm from a chinch-bug country myself, and have had considerable experience with them."

"Where?" I asked.

"Kansas," said he.

"Do any farming down there?" I asked.

"Born and raised at it," he answered, "and have an

interest in a wheat farm there now. That's how I learned about tackling the chinch-bug evil."

Now, I am firmly convinced that he learned about the control of chinch-bugs in college; but if he had said so, and called it the control of chinch-bugs instead of tackling them, he knew I should have refused to accept any advice from him. He led me to believe that he had picked up his knowledge in farming, just the way I have picked up mine, so I would talk with him as farmer to farmer, instead of as common man to expert. We farmers are such fools sometimes; almost as big fools as the American banker or the American manufacturer.

In a business in which only the expert can possibly earn anything above the wages of unskilled labor in other fields, and in which many of us are so inexpert that we actually earn less than do our hired men, there are thousands of farmers who sneer at experts. I have done so myself. I shall no doubt do so at times in the future; but I have learned this much anyhow: I shall sneer only at the men who are, as I shall for the moment believe, imitation experts and not true ones. The real experts—experts in theory as well as practise will always observe me in the act of taking my hat off to them; even if I did earn the reputation of being the prize mossback of the Corn Belt by having a whip-socket put on the dash of my first motor-car. Moreover, I am willing to concede that perhaps a majority of the real farming experts of the country, aside from

the successful farmers, are found in the ranks of the county-agent force of the Bureau of Farm Management of the Department at Washington, working with the farmers in the various counties to which they are accredited under the Smith-Lever Act.

All that can be done to check the ravages of chinch-bugs after harvest, Freeman Clay showed me how to do: I had read it of course, but it had gone into my brain at the eyes and oozed out at the back of my head as most things do that we read. That's the value of the county agent to the fairly well-informed farmer; he makes real the things which otherwise remain wrapped in the haze of things only read of. Only scholars really visualize things which are merely read. Old Doctor Seaman A. Knapp, the father of the county-agent movement, and I think the greatest educator America ever produced, once said to me: "When a man reads a thing he doesn't know it. When you tell it to him he doesn't know it. When you actually do it before his eyes, he still doesn't know it. He never actually knows a thing until he does it with his own hands and brains." On the other hand a friend of mine in New York, who likes to deal in contradictions, is fond of saying that you can't teach any person anything he doesn't already know. Both these men are absolutely right. I knew, in the way one of them meant, how to check the invasions of chinch-bugs marching from the stubble into the corn; but I never really knew it in the way meant by the other until after I had worked it out with Freeman Clay, and found out

how far too late it is to tackle these pests after they have got their big summer start.

"Anyhow," said Freeman, "this is no time to start on chinch-bugs. Over in Lincoln Township the farmers are going to go after the next year's bugs this fall."

"So am I," said I; though I hadn't thought of it until that moment.

"Good," said Freeman; "you can get most of 'em that way."

"Um—how would you advise going about it," I asked cautiously, "er—under our conditions?"

"Well," he answered, "there's no use fighting them individually. It's a community proposition. They're going at it on a township scale over in Lincoln."

"So are we," said I—for I'd be darned if I'd admit I was plumb ignorant of the whole business after beginning with a bluff. Not that we didn't both know that I'd been bluffing; but he is so young, and I'm so old, you see. "Can you come over and help us organize the movement?"

"Sure!" said Freeman. "That's what I'm paid for. And I harbor a bitterness toward chinch-bugs that makes me feel a savage joy in such a frolic."

Well, what with the help of Tom Whelpley, Frank Wiggins and the leaders among the boys and girls, we did make a frolic—and we cleaned them out for the next year. We raked and burned over all the roadsides so there was no wintering places for eggs of bugs. We left no patch of weeds uncut or unburned. We scourged the swales of matted vegetation as with fire

and sword; and gave a shampoo to a lot of lawns and orchards which had not been under the barber's care once in their whole history. We went through groves and hedges with fine-tooth combs; and the smoke of our holocausts ascended to heaven like Indian signal fires for two or three days.

We divided the country into sections of two square miles each, and chose up squads, which were scored by a committee composed of Doctor Faville, Jeff Sharpe, and Ethel Wyatt Fisher, fifty points being allowed each for speed and efficiency. The best three squads got badges which we sent off for, to be won three years in succession in order to be permanently possessed. And we had a dance and feast at the schoolhouse when it was all over. We were that much to the good, no matter what the effect on the bugs; but I really think it did a lot of good. The next year we had no chinches to speak of; and they had a good many in sections where no bugging contest was held. I suppose, too, that we destroyed a great many other bad insects of which we knew nothing. You almost always do better than you expect by being thorough. I reckon that the San Jose scale has been a good thing for the fruit industry; when you spray for scale you rid the orchard of pests of which you never had any suspicion.

This started a kind of intimacy between me and Freeman Clay, and gave me a new slant on the county-agent business. I began taking rides with him in his car or mine, in which we pretty well explored the county. I never realized before how ignorant is the

average farmer of what is going forward on the farms within two hours' run; and I came to believe that we haven't yet really domesticated the automobile as a farm tool. It lays all the farm skill of the countryside under contribution for the farmer who likes to know what the real practical farmers, not the theorists, are doing. It began with excursions with Freeman Clay to see what other neighborhoods were doing in the anti-chinch-bug war; and I found that he was carrying that war into Africa pretty well all over the county. I calculate that in this thing alone he saved the county several times his salary—for we should never have done it if we hadn't had a county hired man to do the drudgery of dragooning us into it.

Pretty soon, however, he began showing me other things. Before I knew it, I had joined with six others to buy bulls cooperatively. You must understand that the bull is just exactly half the herd so far as improvement is concerned, and as it is cheaper to buy good blood in one animal than in ten or twenty or forty, he is really a good deal more than half from the practical view-point.

"Do you know," said Freeman to me, "how many great sires are never recognized as such until after they have gone to the block?"

He went on and told me of scores of great cows whose sires had been dead before it became known what great and valuable animals they were. So we organized this bull club to get good animals, and keep them, passing them from farm to farm among us until

they were aged and tested. Some of these days we'll be found showing the Missourians what's what in breeding—all by the exercise of a little common sense in doing things together instead of separately, and saving on overhead charges all the time. Since then I have made the same sort of arrangement with breeders of my kind of swine, also; and the women and boys are doing the same thing with a bred-to-lay strain of chickens introduced by Mrs. Wilberforce Fogg. They figure on making the two-hundred-egg hen a back-number by developing whole flocks of two-hundred-and-fifty-egg hens, thereby adding to the national wealth a figure one and a whole hatful of naughts. We find these things very fascinating, and lots better things to gossip about than others which might be mentioned.

All this showed me the value of the county agent. Our neighborhood was all right as a neighborhood; but it was not large enough for the cooperation and the organization we needed. For instance, when the Federal Farm Loan Act was passed it was not in the Fairview settlement that the first National Farm Loan Association was formed for the purpose of getting the benefit on the farm of the building-and-loan association idea which has done so much in the cities; but over on Beaver Creek quite out of our bailiwick. Freeman Clay found out that several farmers over there needed loans on long time for slow-fruiting improvements, and while he didn't appear in their organization, he did figure out for them that by borrowing money for thirty-five years, with the privilege of paying off in

whole or in part after five years, that they could earn more than twice the interest charge, and not be worried about the mortgage ever falling due. They have the right to call their own loans at any time after five years, and nobody else on earth has that power over them. In other words, for the first time in the history of the American farmer, the borrower, rather than the lender, is to have the say about time and terms.

The Beaver Creek people are admitting a Fairview borrower to their association occasionally. The Reverend Frank Wiggins was the first of us to go in, so as to get the money to finance a silo and a lounging-barn for his cows—he is abandoning the stanchion system, though I think he is wrong in this. The money through the government system costs five and a half per cent. One per cent. more, making six and a half per annum, will "amortize" or "kill off" the mortgage in thirty-five years. Frank figures that, even on a fifteen-acre farm, he can easily make the silo pay him ten per cent. on the investment by keeping the silage made in seasons of excessive crops and for bad seasons when feed is scarce through drought or something of the sort.

"There is never a time," says he, "three years together when a silo will not pay for itself in whole or in great part by giving the dairyman feed when otherwise he would have to buy dear or sacrifice a part of his herd. It doesn't pay, perhaps, to fill a silo in September and begin emptying it in October; but give me silage in August every year when the pastures are short, or the silage of wet 1912 kept over for dry 1914,

and I'll show you profits on the silo that will make both interest and amortization look small."

This is pretty sensible talk for a preacher; and I was gratified to see Frank developing sound business sense along with his visionary ideas. I discovered, however, that he probably got it from the county agent, Freeman Clay, who was preaching all over the county the fact that the new Federal Farm Loan Act is making it necessary for the farmers to figure interest on investments instead of first costs.

"Don't ask me what this will cost," he used to say to the farmers we visited, "when you can get the money on your own time at low rates of interest whenever you want it. Ask yourself what interest it will pay on the investment. If it costs you two hundred and fifty dollars a year, and pays you four hundred dollars you can add one hundred and fifty dollars a year to your labor income by borrowing. Instead of a mortgage being a disgrace under such circumstances, it is a discredit not to have one."

He pointed out to me the fact that the small borrower now has an equal chance with the big one. Now it has been for a long time a fact in the Corn Belt that the farmer who doesn't need a loan of at least four or five thousand dollars isn't of much consequence to the loan companies, though for the big loans we certainly have already had good credit at rather low rates. Personally I never felt that it was good business to encumber my farm for two or three thousand dollars; and I never needed all that my farm would stand in the way of a loan; but lots of men who could borrow ten thou-

sand if they had to, could use a quarter of that as working capital at a profit. I began figuring on the thing; and Freeman and I worked the problem out in this way: I might take, say, twenty-five hundred dollars in a Federal Farm Loan and use it in developing my feeding operations. I could, for instance, get the money cheaper in that way for buying lambs to put in my corn-fields after harvest to clean up the pigeon grass that naturally comes in, and eat the lower foliage of the corn and the rape I might sow between the rows, and make fifty cents or a dollar a head by the operation. It's good farming to do it, too. Or I might take advantage of the market to buy any other stock—when it is cheap, or steers, or heifers, or sheep as my feed made it possible. That much money ought to pay for itself and a little besides, as I'm fixed.

"But," said I, "as I turned these deals the money would come in, and would be idle at times, and all the while I'd be paying interest on it. That's an objection."

"You ought to figure to keep it busy," said he; "that's a part of the business of a business farmer. There ought to be a text-book published on the use of money under the Federal Farm Loan Act. It's going to be the most important part of the farmer's business from now on. As for your periods of idle money, why not invest it when it must be idle in Federal Farm Loan bonds, and cut down your loss of interest to a per cent. or half a per cent.? You ought to be able to stand that for the sake of having a supply of working capital."

I am so much impressed with the idea that I believe I'll join the Beaver Creek National Farm Loan Association and indulge in the luxury of keeping two or three thousand extra dollars working for me all the time. That's how the new law will help the farmers with big investments in their farms. If I don't like the scheme, I'll pay off after five years. I feel perfectly sure I can make money by the transaction; and I surely can't lose much.

This sort of business farming is coming to be a great part of the county agent's work in the Corn Belt. To be sure he still looks after the A B C of farming, in cow-testing associations, boys' and girls' clubs, pig clubs, acre-yield contests, seed corn campaigns, calf fairs, colt fairs, egg-circles, beef rings, and county short courses for the young people; but in a community like Fairview, already well socialized by such people as our school force and the Wigginses, he has to rise to a higher plane. He has reached this, too, in another movement he inaugurated. This was the contest of Extensive vs. Intensive Farming.

Frank Wiggins is an enthusiastic exponent of the small farm. "I tell you," said he to Freeman Clay and some more of us one day, "Doctor Spillman's investigators in the Department of Agriculture may show that as farming is now done, here, in Chester County, Pennsylvania, and elsewhere, the big farm pays the better labor income, but what they say isn't the last word. My little fifteen-acre patch of glebeland is nearer the last word."

"You don't make the labor income off it," said Free-

man Clay, "that Mr. Dunham, or Mr. Bohn, or any of the other big farmers make on their operations."

"True," said Frank, "but see who does their work, and see who does mine. My work is done by a self-respecting citizen of the community who has a happy wife, doing good things in the community, and a couple of healthy babies. Who does Mr. Bohn's work, or Mr. Sharpe's?"

"Hoboes," said Jeff.

Abel Bohn nodded. So did I.

"You big farmers," said Frank, "make your labor incomes out of men who drift out in the farming season, and in the winter spend their time in lodging-houses for down-and-outers in St. Louis and Chicago. and eke out the time before the spring elections by selling their votes to corrupt ward politicians for beer and a warm place by the radiator. They are the Huns and Vandals who will tear down our Greater Rome. With my little labor income, I live like a king, and I'm a good citizen. Yours is not clean money, my friends —mine is!"

There was a long pause during which I waited for some one readier-witted than I to show Frank the foolishness of his visionary stuff. Finally Freeman Clay spoke up.

"I have been thinking," said he, "that it might be instructive if we made a comparison of the results, even in labor income, between the small farm well tilled, and the large farm. What the Department of the state stations have published show only average results. Average results in Mexico or Argentina would damn

the farm of a thousand acres as against the ranch of twenty thousand to a million. The question is what do both show in profits under the best conditions?"

"In profits," said Frank; "and in men, women and children."

"Yes," said Freeman Clay, "and in social values. Of course they come in; but not for the economist."

"So much the worse," said Frank, "for the economist. What is Uncle Abner's bank roll worth, if it means a man or two every winter rotting in a Chicago saloon, and corrupting Chicago politics?"

"Suppose," said Freeman, "that we run a contest beginning March first, between a dozen small farms and a dozen large ones?"

"I'm in!" said the preacher.

"And you'll be in," said I, "with fifteen acres of the richest land out-of-doors, because you flim-flammed me out of a marsh, and wheedled Abel here into letting you pump the water across the road on him! Do you call that fair?"

"I do!" exclaimed Frank. "I'm making billions of blades grow, Uncle Abner, where you and Brother Bohn, by your mulishness, made cat-tails and wild parsnips grow; and never would have done any better."

"That," said Abel, "is true, Brother Dunham."

Well, we had the contest. I went in, and so did Abel, and Jeff Sharpe and Wilson Beebe, and enough more farmers to make a dozen. Frank's farm was the baby of the small holders, and the others ran from

forty acres up to eighty—all small farms for this part of the country. I never took so much pains with my farming since I broke the prairie in the seventies. Freeman Clay, impartial as a judge, went from farm to farm, big and little alike, and talked things over with us. There was a good deal of excitement at our County Farm Bureau Meetings, and a lot of mental money changed hands on the outcome. The state experts got interested. The results are embodied in the first bulletin published by our County Farm Bureau, written by Freeman Clay. Jeff Sharpe's income was by all odds the largest; but I was beaten by Peter Barto, with his little dinky forty-eight-acre farm and his ten-cow dairy. We eliminated truck farms and orchards, because we wanted the race to be run by real farmers mounted on real farms, and there is no doubt that Pete's is such a one. Here's his record for the year, giving him more than two hundred dollars more than I made on my operations:

INCOME.

| | |
|---|---|
| Milk checks | $1,500 |
| Hogs | 300 |
| Fruit | 100 |
| Poultry and poultry products | 100 |
| Calves sold for veal | 65 |
| Seed grain sold | 150 |
| Stock sold | 450 |
| Sundries | 40 |
| Total receipts | $2,705 |

EXPENSES.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Feed | $400 | |
| Labor | 40 | |
| Silo filling and threshing | 25 | |
| Seed purchased | 25 | |
| Taxes | 26 | |
| Insurance | 6 | |
| Sundries | 100 | |
| | | $622 |
| Interest on investment, $8,000, 6% | | 480 |
| Depreciation | | 300 |
| Total expenses | | $1,402 |
| Labor income | | $1,303 |

Now this makes Peter Barto easily the real winner of the contest, though other large farms besides the Sharpe place brought in more labor income than did Pete's. Pete had a good income when it is considered that all the produce the family consumed for their living is left out of the account; and when it is further taken into the reckoning that the average labor income of the American farmer is from two hundred to four hundred dollars after allowing him interest on his investment at five per cent. instead of six, as was done in our contest. You see Pete's folks had $1,782 to spend that year when their interest on investment was added to their labor income—and they had this after they had got a good part of their living off the little farm.

Note, too, that Pete's folks did practically all their

own work; but don't think that the Bartoes lived below American standards. They have running water in the house, a fine bathroom, furnace heating and a gasoline lighting system; and Pete's car cost more than mine. They used it, too, in a sensible way; and as liberally as people can who do their own work. They have a milking machine for their cows, and every up-to-date thing which ought to distinguish well-to-do American farming. Their farming is not fancy, but staple farming. The basis of it is ten cows, not pure-breds, but grade Holsteins, that bring in from $102.30 per year, the record that year of the poorest, to $208.23 per year which was earned by his best, a prize-winning milker.

Barto was not, like Frank Wiggins, blessed with a farm of exceptional richness. It was badly run down when he bought it fifteen years or so ago. He labored under a mortgage, too, for years, and paid it off from his earnings. He made his original start on a small farm, and his whole proposition is a small-farm success. He keeps on the farm the ten cows, a team of horses, and some young stock, besides the poultry and the automobile. His success has been made with cows, tile drain, clover, and barnyard manure.

This demonstration was made by Freeman Clay, I feel sure, for the purpose of showing the Department of Agriculture that there is something yet to be said as between extensive farming and intensive farming. Frank Wiggins, whose record was pretty good, was exultant. He preached a sermon the next Sunday, on

the text, "I went by the field of the slothful and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding," in which he showed, to his own satisfaction at least, that Freeman Clay is tilling his own particular field, to wit, this county—mighty well, and that the fellows who speak for the big farm just because the big farm pays best, as it is farmed on the average, are the men void of understanding.

Not that I think this just. I believe that one of these days the Department will come out with a study of the small farm which will tell us something about what they call successful departures from the norm toward more intensive farming. In fact, a few years ago they did this very thing, but have since discredited the Bulletins on Small Farms with matter which seems opposed to their lessons. Not that I have become a believer in intensive farming of the sort preached by the Little Landers—who, it seems to me are just plain crazy. But there is a middle ground between the pocket-handkerchief farming of Japan and the all-outdoors kind which the experts now seem to favor. The big farm is morally wrong, as long as there are people who want farms and can't get them.

I think I must have made plain by this time the function of Uncle Sam in Fairview. It is to show us that no matter how well organized a neighborhood may be, the county agent is needed. Uncle Sam, through the county agent, possesses the power to spread the good things of our Fairviews over whole counties, states, and finally over the whole nation, north, south, east

and west; and to build up Fairviews where they are not. To put a missionary of good farming in every county in every farming region in the United States is an epochal thing.

Unless this is done as a permanent thing, however, the Smith-Lever Act will fail to do its duty. It is rather sad to see that the poorest regions in every state are the last to get this help—so that it still fails to reach the people who need it most. It might have been better, for instance, to have set Freeman Clay working in one of the twenty-three counties in Southern Illinois which, at last accounts, because they can not pay their portions of the agents' salaries, have no county agents, than to have had him sent to our county where we were doing pretty well without him. Any educational law which succeeds where education is general, and fails where it is needed, is not altogether a perfect law.

So this will be about all from your Uncle Abner Dunham on the Fairview Idea. It is the greatest idea in the world. It relates to the improvement of the biggest business of all Big Business—Farming. This is a business which has been all hands and no head. The Fairview Idea will give it head. It shows that the country church may not only be as good a church as that of the city, but a better one, we think, than any city can possibly produce. It shows that the rural school may be and ought to be a better school than any city school can possibly be. It shows that country life

—poor and sordid as it usually is—may be richer and fuller than city life at its best. The Fairview Idea has the power to transmute a stand-pat farming reactionary into an agricultural progressive with something of the apostolic in his heart. And why not? For ages society has taken bread from the farmer's hand, and given him back a stone; from him it has received fishes and paid for them in serpents.

For many of us older people not much may be done; but think of the unending generations of little girls and boys coming on and on out of the fruitful womb of time to tread the furrows of America to the end that a world may be fed and clothed; and to receive for these things, what? The sordid things, the false things, and the useless things which have been given to them in the past; or that vital enlightenment of which my New England ancestors must dimly have dreamed when they set up free institutions, and free schools?

For the farm boys and girls of the future there must be justice and opportunity according to the measure of the ages in which they are to live. Opportunity to know, to live, and to seek the truth. Some disquieting truth we have encountered in Fairview; but all truth is good. Even though we hook the Midgard Snake, still we must go on fishing in the ocean of human knowledge. Whatever of change is necessary for the working out of justice as between Man and the Land is beyond me to say; but I feel sure that such changes as are essential can be made by that farming people only who really live and think, and by their living and

thinking are brought to the envisagement of their own tremendous problems—the basic problems of the world; because they are the questions growing out of the relations of Man to the Planet out of which he comes, on which he lives, and into which he dissolves. The Fairview Idea carried to its logical development, will give the farmers of the future such a life. Where Truth leads is none of our business. It is ours to follow her unquestioningly, making sure first of only one fact—is she really Truth?

THE END

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Quick, Herbert

Fairview idea.

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